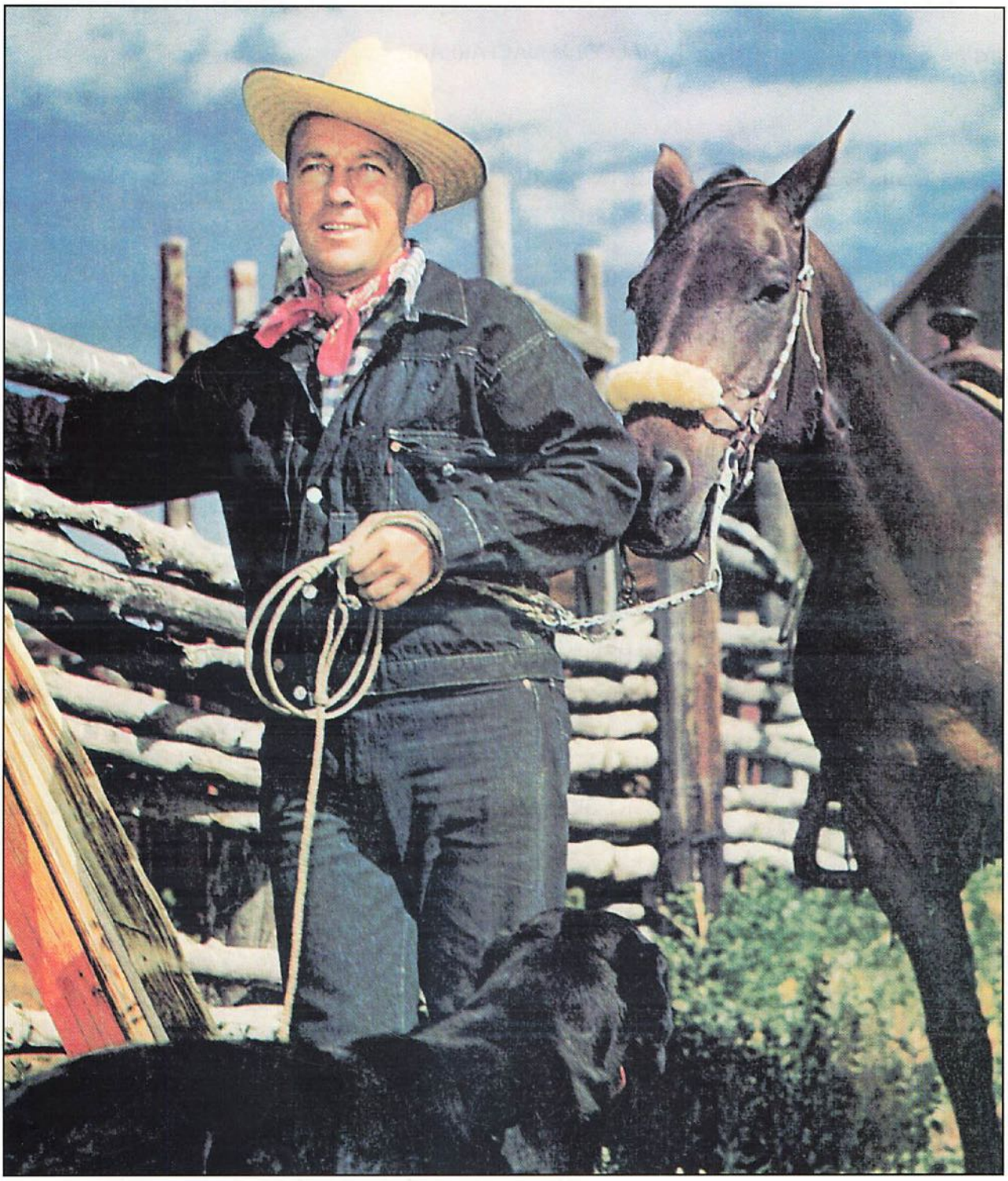
BING

SPRING
1998

No. 118



THE INTERNATIONAL CROSBY CIRCLE

THE INTERNATIONAL CROSBY CIRCLE

Founded 1950

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CONTENTS

Page Nos.

Editorial 4
Secretary / Treasurer's Report 5
Letter from Leslie 6
The Bing Calendar 7
Bing - A Poem 8
Bing in the USA 9
Books 'n' Bing 12
Trading Post 13
Celluloid Crosby 14
The A - Z of Bing's Movies 16
Bing - A Diary of a Lifetime 18
Twelve Hour Day Fails To Slow Up Bing 20
Memories 21
One Sweet Letter From You 22
Lionel's Lines - "You're Like a Sweetheart of Mine" 26
Once in a While 30
Bert Bishop's "Bing On the Box" 31
Keeping Track 39
The Way We Were 46
Bing on Laserdisc 48
What the Papers Say 51

Membership renewals fall due on 1st. January each year and subscription rates effective for 1998 remain as:

UK	£8 per annum
Mainland Europe, including Eire	£9 per annum
USA and Canada	US $20 per annum
Australia and New Zealand	A$30 per annum
South America	£11.50 per annum

All remittances should be sent in **£ sterling** payable to 'Michael Crampton - ICC' with the exception of (a) U.S. and Canadian members who should send their remittances in U.S. dollars to F. B. Wiggins (b) Australian and New Zealand members who should pay David Currington in Australian dollars (c) Mainland European members (not Eire) who should pay Etty Gits in £ sterling. For addresses see inside front cover.

Articles for inclusion in the magazine should be sent to the Magazine Editor.
Other Correspondence concerning membership, non-arrival of the magazine or other aspects of the club's affairs should be sent to the Hon. Secretary/Treasurer.

BING is the official journal of the International Crosby Circle and is published in the Spring, Summer and Winter of each year. Opinions expressed in articles are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the ICC. All original material ©Copyright ICC 1998.

EDITORIAL

So now we have got coloured covers as a regular feature of the magazine and don't they make a difference? The covers for the last edition were put together at the last moment as the printer had obtained some new equipment and offered us a coloured cover free of charge. The rare items on the back cover last time were supplied by Peter Haizelden. From now on, we have to pay extra for the coloured covers but I feel sure that you will agree that they are well worth while. It's given Ron Bosley a fresh headache though and he is busily searching through his files for his best colour photographs of Bing. The front cover this time shows Bing at his Elko ranch whilst the back cover was kindly supplied to us by Ernest Sutkowski and it is a 1936 Swedish film poster for 'Pennies from Heaven'.

May 3, 2003 will be the 100th. anniversary of Bing's birth and we ought to start now to plan how world-wide Crosbyana is going to mark the event. Should we have a major gathering at Gonzaga (if they will have us) or should it be in Tacoma? Should there be separate gatherings in Los Angeles, New York, Australia, London and Leeds? I should like to start a debate now and perhaps we can consider the options open to us. We must not let this milestone pass us by without taking appropriate action. Please let me have your views.

In February, my long suffering wife, Pat, and I decided to try to find some Winter sun and we went off to Orlando in Florida for a week intending to lie by the pool reading books. Whilst the weather was nice, it was not really hot enough for our purposes so I took myself off to the local library to look up a few queries in old editions of the New York Times. Whilst there, I noticed some bound volumes containing all of the television reviews from Variety magazine from the 1940s to the 1980s. Naturally I looked up all of Bing's television appearances I could remember and I took well over 100 photocopies of some very interesting reviews indeed. I'll reproduce some of these in coming editions and I hope that you will be as fascinated as me as you read comments good and bad about Bing's earlier TV shows.

From Orlando, Pat and I went south and looked in at Palm Beach to see member Norman Wolfe who is still working on his own book about Bing. Although I had never met noted Canadian broadcaster Gord Atkinson, we had corresponded and I knew that he spent his winters at Boynton Beach which was not that far from Norman's home. I telephoned Gord and invited him to join Norman and I for lunch which he duly did bringing with him his friend, the famous entertainer Rich Little, who happened to be in Florida at the same time. Rich worked with Bing on television a couple of times and also appeared in Bing's 'come-back' performance in Los Angeles on March 17, 1976. Gord Atkinson had been to Bing's home on several occasions and both he and Rich had a fund of Bing recollections and also other show business stories which kept Norman and I in rapt attention. A fascinating interlude and I made a video of Gord and Rich sending a greeting to ICC members which I shall show at our Leeds gathering.

There's a lot of good material in this issue and as always the problem has been in knowing what to leave out. I hope it all merits your approval. The copy date for the Summer edition of BING is June 25 and early submission of articles and letters would be welcomed.

Malcolm Macfarlane

SECRETARY/TREASURER'S REPORT

Successful, satisfying and rewarding are the adjectives that come to mind when trying to describe the 1997 International Crosby Circle year. Your management team has worked harder than ever to keep pace with members' requests for service and I am pleased to record our thanks and indebtedness to all who have made a successful club possible.

Recent very welcome CD releases, radio broadcasts and Malcolm's DIARY OF A LIFETIME have all generated and rekindled interest in Bing's career such that new members are finding us almost on a daily basis. Happily we can welcome 35 new members to our Circle with more to list when we publish details of North American membership in our Summer issue of BING.

AUSTRALIA
Maureen Curran (Rockingham WA), Arthur Coulson (Penshurst NSW) .
NORWAY
Finne Arne Tellefsen (Jar).
GERMANY
Martin Stempel (Berlin).
GREAT BRITAIN
D Clark (Essex), F Cotterhill (Liverpool), M Haywood (Kent), J Lynch (Herts), J Moore (Tyne & Wear), A Plummer (London), B Ridgeway (Dublin), M Scullian (Co. Antrim), R Spoke (Co. Dublin), N Vaughan (Gwent), A H Wilson (Cumbria), A Stead (London), T Newman (Wilts.), R M Gleeson (Lincoln), E W Geeleher (Wirral), S Bolan (Glos.), P Wolland (Essex), D McNamee (Co. Dublin), M Erian (Kent), L W Pugh (Leics.), G W Deakin (Nr. Crewe).

DONATIONS
Increased interest in the affairs of the International Crosby Circle has resulted in a record figure for donations by our ever loyal members. We extend our gratitude to all who have given generously over and above their annual subscription. Special mention must be made of Ted Burnell whose generous gifts have now realised over £1000 for our funds. We salute Ted and are pleased to offer him the privilege of Honorary Life Membership.

Our appreciation and gratitude also go to:-
R Addey, G Adey, R J Barker, J Bignell, B Bishop, R Booth, D Bostock, A C Bowerman, Y Bowles, L Brice, S Britt, J Brown, J Byron, J Cable, V Campbell, D Campkin, J P Carpenter, R F Chaplin, G Chappells, A Conn, M Conroy, P Diffley, B Emery, L Farrell, A D Fisher, D Flear, R J Glover, R E Gould, L S Grasby, J Griffiths, K A Heason, D G Hellier, P Hennessy, J Hobday, R Holder, P Howard, T Hughes, J Hunt, H Jones, H Kirman, B Lane, R Larkin, S Lawrence, R Leach, B Lewis, D Love, M Mansley, J Manton, L Mills, P Monaghan, V J Monk, T Mooney, N Morrison, A W Mutter (now deceased), M North, W Oldfield, I Orr, G Owen, T Page, G Patmore, D Perkins, K Perry, A Pope, M Rattigan, G L Robinson, H C Ross, P Rossiter, A Sherlow, T Slaughter, A C Smith, D Spong, Mrs M Stevenson, J Stiles, C G Sullivan, E Swithenbank, J Tasker, J Weir, B Wesley, T White, S Woodford.

DEATHS
With sadness we record the deaths of Alf Mutter and Mrs E E Hey and send our sincere condolences to their families.

SUBSCRIPTIONS 1998
Most members were good enough to react to my appeal for early submission of their annual fees but around 75 UK members still have not responded. Can I please request prompt payment following this second appeal for your 1998 dues. Your secretary does not have enough spare time to be sending out reminders so please check now that your fees have been paid.

CALENDAR 1998
Plenty of copies remain of this impressive coloured calendar and I would welcome further orders from members or friends!

BING CROSBY IN THE 40'S
Our UK allocation of 30 copies have now sold out and we congratulate Gary on another fine tome and a very nice tribute to Bing's industry.

Jim Reilly, who underwent surgery in March and to whom we extend our best wishes for a speedy recovery, and Wig Wiggins have further CD treats in store for us in 1998 and along with BING 119/120 and a possible video from MCA plus a double film CD we have much still to look forward to. We are indeed, as Reg Bristo used to say, fortunate fans.

Jonzo 1 & 2 have now been issued and with luck more volumes are to follow if the known alternate takes can be made available to John McNicolas for use in this important series. We trust suitable accommodations can be made so that these rare takes can reach the ears of collectors and appreciators around the world.

Until Summer, Aloha.

Michael Crampton

INTERNATIONAL CROSBY CIRCLE

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR 12 MONTHS TO 31 DECEMBER 1997

Income	£	Expenditure	£
Subscriptions and donations	5304	BING (printing)	2900
Diary sales and donations	1850	BING (postage)	2130
Books from John Joyce	1585	Diary costs	5423
Sales - Jonzo CDs	1392	Books from John Joyce	1585
Sales - Ted Burnell collection	1051	Jonzo CDs	1272
Sales - Calendars	625	Secretarial	936
Sales - CD books	400	Fax machine	300
Sales of items for Mrs M. Joyce	121	AGM	365
Sales - E Griffiths collection	120	Calendar	250
Sales - back issues	70	Editorial costs	204
		Songography	196
		Purchase of LP records	158
		Payment to Mrs M Joyce	121
Interest 1997	131	Sundries	128
Balance 31/12/96	6569	Balance 31/12/97	3250
	19218		19218

NOTES 1. The accounts show the full costs of the Diary project but not the full income from this as sales proceeds were received after the year end.
2. Postage costs were much heavier than usual but useful amounts were received after the year end in reimbursement of some of this.
3. The AGM costs include the replacement of items stolen at the AGM itself.
4. Sundries includes refunds and unpaid cheques
5. It should be noted that these accounts are a simple Income and Expenditure summary and that they do not take account of amounts owing by or to the Club nor are items held as stock shown. The Club is in a sound financial position and able to cover its likely expenditure in 1998.

Michael Crampton
Secretary / Treasurer

LETTER FROM LESLIE

Our man on the Isle of Wight, Leslie Gaylor, drops us his usual note.

I know that I nearly always start my letter by saying how much I enjoyed the last issue of BING, so I will make no exception now. It was very good and I particularly liked the coloured front and back pages. My congratulations go to all those concerned with the production.

May I take this opportunity to thank all those members who wrote to me expressing their delight at having acquired the "Memories" compact disc. I too was very pleased with this CD. When you consider the vast number of titles Jim Reilly had to select from, the end result is just fine. I am pleased that Jim struck up a good relationship with Alan Hodgson of Universal Music UK to ensure that the CD came into being - thanks Jim

You will be pleased to learn that Jim is at present working with Alan Hodgson to come up with a follow up CD to "Memories". Early indications suggest that this may be named "More Memories". Please don't write to Jim with suggestions as the parameters have already been well laid down and friends Ernest Sutkowski and Stan White together with myself are involved with the selection of titles. By the time this issue of BING is in your hands all the titles should have been decided and if all goes to plan MCA propose to release the CD in September.

Not long ago, Ken Barnes sent me his appraisal of Recording Engineer Peter J Reynolds of Gemini Studios, Ipswich, England and his accomplice Pat Grucher. I noted that the skills of these same gentlemen at this studio turned up on 'The Complete United Artists Sessions' compact disc. I mention this as Ken had told me that he was to use an alternate take of "A Little Love And Understanding" on the album but had a change of heart and used the same version as on the LP. Only one copy of this alternate take was made and I am now, thanks to the kindness of Ken, the proud owner of a studio CD with this on it. I am certainly very pleased to have this CD.

Incidentally it was nice to see the large advertisement for this United Artists CD set in The Daily Telegraph on Thursday 12th February 1998. It is not too often that we get to see adverts for Bing these days.

It is increasingly difficult for me to come up with new things to tell you in each magazine and I am sorry that this is a short letter this time around. Until next time however, my best wishes go to all members.

Leslie Gaylor

THE BING CALENDAR FOR 1998

It's guaranteed that arrival of the new year's calendar with its facsimiles of song copies, will raise queries from those receiving it. 1998 has provided a bumper crop and apart from, "Never heard of it", the question will be, "When did Bing sing it?" I know little of the music publishing business but it is a matter of fact that there have been instances when artistes received some inducement to permit their image to be portrayed on the front cover without ever having sung that particular song. This was before Trade Descriptions Acts and one would hope that some meagre integrity might be demonstrated by the claims, "Recorded By", "As Sung By", "Successfully Introduced By", "Featured By" etc.

Having said this, two opportunities are missed, from the outset with the front cover and January as both "South Of The Border" (1939) and "The White Cliffs Of Dover" (1941) only carry Bing's photograph but were, indeed, featured by him on Kraft Music Hall, each on three separate occasions. The same applies to March and April with "Goodnight, Little Girl Of My Dreams" (1933) and "Have You Ever Been Lonely? (Have You Ever Been Blue)" (1933). The first was used on the Woodbury Soap show on 18th December 1933 and the second on the Music That Satisfies programme on 29th March 1933.

Another song which carries no assertions is, "Down A Carolina Lane" (1933), the selection for June. This had words by Mitchell Parish and was popularised and recorded by the bands of Isham Jones and George Hall but no trace, so far, of Bing having used it. The song copies which do display "featured by" - See December for, "Save The Last Dance For Me" (1931) was popularised and recorded by Russ Columbo and also featured by Arthur Tracy and was broadcast by Bing, no less than four times on his Cremo programme, between December 1931 and January 1932.

At the moment and as far as Bing is concerned, the remaining items (May, July, August and November) remain shrouded in mystery. "Hold Me" (1933), Written and introduced by Little Jack Little, recorded by Eddy Duchin, Peggy Lee, Billy Cotton and Jack Hylton, also used in MGM's "Peg O' My Heart' (1933) and Fox's "The Three Faces Of Eve" (1957). "Deep River" (1917) Traditional Negro spiritual - a new arrangement was published in 1935 by H. T. Burleigh - recordings by Paul Robeson, Marian Anderson, Ezio Pinza and Tommy Dorsey. "With A Dime In My Pocket (and You) I'm A Millionaire" (1932) written by James Brockman whose main claim to fame is that he also wrote, "Down Among The Sheltering Palms" but this, together with three of the "unplaced" songs already mentioned, could fit into the blank spaces that still exist for the "Music That Satisfies" or "Woodbury Soap" radio series.

The last and most enigmatic is "Two In Love" by Meredith Willson published in 1941, introduced and recorded by Tommy Dorsey with vocal by Frank Sinatra. So far, no indication has be found that this was aired on the Bing's Kraft programmes. Our searches continue into the missing items but hopefully we have filled a few gaps for you all.

Whilst on the subject of song titles, the letter (December issue) from John Joyce (Wolverhampton) has raised some imponderable questions. There is no indication that Bing ever sang, "In Love In Vain" on an AFRS broadcast but it was sung by Ben Gage on Command Performance No.228, broadcast in the Summer of 1946. Ben Gage served as announcer on a couple of Command Performances and was also sometime vocalist with Anson Weeks Orchestra. I have no examples of this singer's style, could he have been mistaken for Bing?

Regarding, "It All Depends On You", we have no knowledge that Bing ever sang with the Ben Bemie Orchestra and as the item is "not for sale" we are unlikely to find out. However, the song was a hit for the band, as far back as 1927. Can John Joyce let us hear a taping of the song?

Lionel Pairpoint

BING'S LAST LETTER?

We all know that Bing was a prolific letter writer and that he took particular pleasure in replying to letters from fans, especially if they had sent him something. Ken Crossland appeared on Radio Shropshire last year and following this he was sent a copy letter by the daughter of the lady to whom it was addressed which purports to be one of the last letters that Bing ever wrote.

The envelope is postmarked "London, 5:15 p.m., 14 Oct. 1977" and it is addressed to Mrs. Mary Mason, 22 Lombard Street, Leeds 15. The letter is hand-written and reads as follows:

Wednesday.

Dear Mrs Mason,

How kind you were to offer me your late husbands records - I do have a complete set of everything I ever recorded - more as a record within the music industry.

England is always so pleasant to visit - our recent loss has not dimmed our warm feelings for your charming Island or its superb people.

Much much happiness in your new marriage

Ever sincerely, Bing Crosby

P.S. please forgive mismatched envelopes and paper!

Bing's last letter ? Possibly not. The phrases don't sound like Bing and the signature differs from others I have seen.

For your charming Island or
its superb people.
Much much happiness
in your new marriage
Ever Sincerely
Bing Crosby

P.S. Please forgive mismatched
Envelopes & paper! BC

If Bing didn't write it, who did? I think Alan Fisher, Bing's butler is the likely culprit and we do know that he dealt with a lot of outstanding matters for Bing at that time. But nevertheless a very interesting item.

BING - A POEM

Cornish poet, David Prowse wrote a poem about Bing to tie in with the twentieth anniversary of his death and this was duly broadcast on BBC Radio Devon. David has kindly given us permission to reproduce his poem which we do with great pleasure.

BING

He was Harry Lillis Crosby from Tacoma
But recognised as Bing by you and me,
He didn't change the world within his amble through the years,
He just made it seem a better place to be.

His voice was that most envied of perfections
To which all bathroom baritones aspire,
A hazy, mellow, swirling lilt which glided through the scales
Like chimney-smoke ascending from a fire.

The gift, itself, was fashioned by the angels,
But after that, the rest was down to him,
The drawling, smiling nonchalance and unaffected ease
As though he came and went upon a whim.

That languid image fails to do him justice
For all talent needs development and care,
And everything that Crosby tried or set himself to do
Became another crown that he could wear.

From dance-band vocalising to the movies
Through radio and records on the way,
He simply seemed to puff his pipe and take it in his stride
And still make time for eighteen holes a day.

So he could put an Oscar on the sideboard,
Then act the clown with Dorothy Lamour
And that man, Hope, the other half of inspiration's team
Which surfaced on the Road to Singapore.

Diversity would never find him wanting
For his repertoire was wide as it was long,
from blaring, brassy, big-band swing to lullabies of love,
He merely cleared his throat and sang the song.

So each of us could claim his own memento
To set beside the hat and sporty shoes,
A special tune, a poignant scene or one that stirred a smile,
He left us with a host from which to choose.

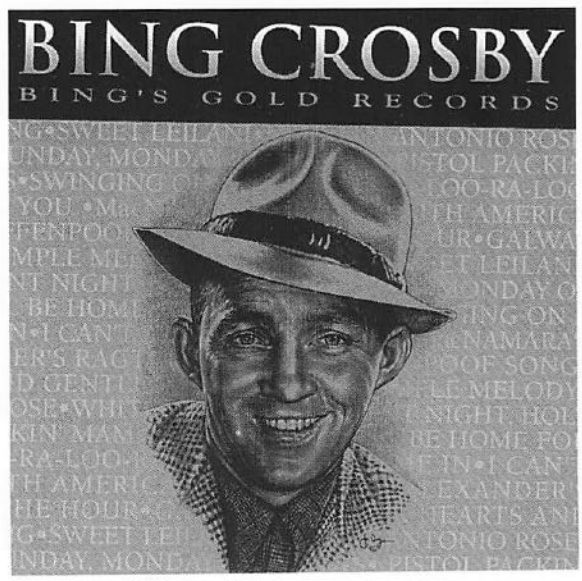
He took the fond remembrances we cherish
And he graced them with a casual delight,
For who among us shares a toast upon the festive eve
Without his wish that Christmases be white?

Oh, a cynic might say, 'just an entertainer'
But millions round the globe would disagree,
No, he didn't change the world with his amble through the years,
He just made it seem a better place to be.

David Prowse 8th October 1997

A very nice tribute. David said that his poem was always intended to be a pencil sketch rather than an intimate portrait but if it captured something of Bing's abilities, his nature and his contribution to the world of entertainment then it would have largely achieved its purpose. I think we can safely agree that it certainly did that.

David's works are featured regularly on BBC Radio Cornwall and BBC Radio Devon and are printed weekly in the Western Morning News newspaper. He has published two books to date, 'Poems for the Early Bird' (1992) and 'Say One for Me' (1995), each containing approximately 40 poems. David can be contacted at 'Glencorse', Tregender Lane, Crowlas, Penzance TR20 8DJ (tel. 01736 740396).



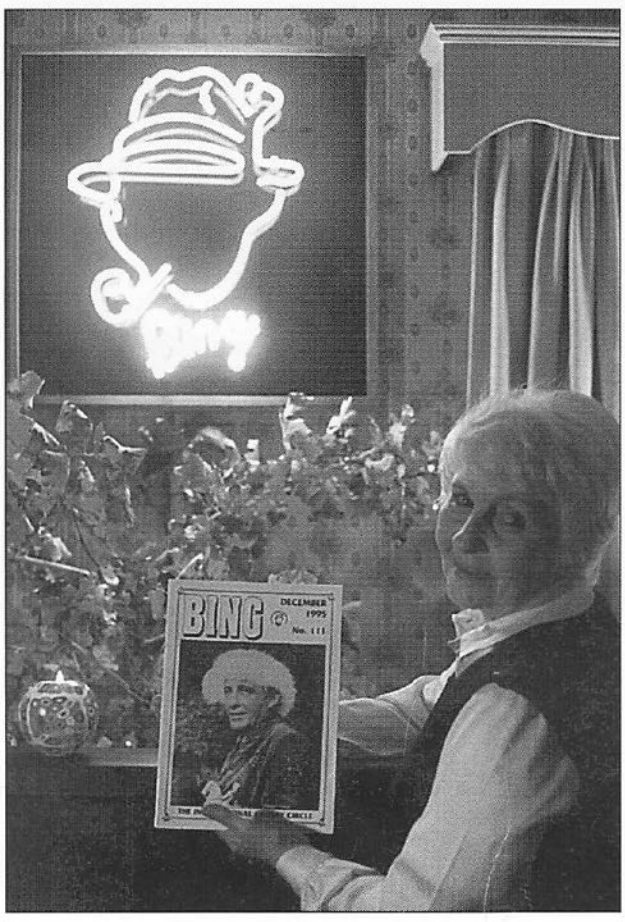
BING IN THE USA

In this first issue of BING for 1998, I would like to extend a warm welcome to all of the new American and Canadian members who have joined the ICC during the past year. The ICC Management Committee welcomes your support and encourages you to contribute to BING by submitting articles, letters or ideas for subjects to be covered in forthcoming issues. Other ICC members will welcome your contributions.

BING IN NEON LIGHTS

Goldie Lynn of Topeka, Kansas, joined the ICC in 1997, after having been a staunch Bing Crosby fan for many years without realising that there was an organised group like the ICC that appreciated Bing the way she always had. Since joining, Goldie has become one of our most enthusiastic ICC members, and it has been a distinct personal pleasure for me to have the opportunity to know Goldie and to assist her Crosby collecting activities.

Goldie's renewed enthusiasm about Bing has even resulted in her son, John, creating a unique, hand-crafted adaptation of the ICC logo in neon lights for Goldie which she now proudly displays on a wall in her home. Goldie's special "neon-Bing" is a very attractive and most unusual tribute to the Old Groaner, and one which indicates the pleasure that ICC members can experience from their continuing interest in Bing's legacy. My thanks to Goldie for sharing her Bing display with other ICC members.



BING'S GOLD RECORDS

Our fellow ICC member, Vice President Andy McKaie of MCA Records in Los Angeles, has informed me that sales of MCA's new "Bing's Gold Records" compact disc (MCAD-11719) have been excellent since it was released in the U.S. last November. Re-orders from wholesalers after the holiday shopping season have continued to be strong, and I can confirm from my own observations that "Bing's Gold Records" continues to be prominently displayed in music stores throughout the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area these days. This was a major factor behind MCA's decision to release this CD - - to produce an appealing collection of Bing's best Decca recordings for the general public - - and one which might become a perennial bestseller in future years, like Bing's legendary "Merry Christmas" album. I certainly hope that this does turn out to be the case, and I believe it will. After all, "Bing's Gold Records" provides for the first time on one CD the very best of his quarter century as Decca's top recording star

PLAY (SOME) SIMPLE MELODY?

Listening carefully to one of Bing's recordings frequently produces a surprise - - usually pleasant and/or fascinating - - when his unique way with a song becomes apparent, often for the first time. Even for songs that you thought you knew thoroughly, if not entirely too well. While working with fellow ICC members Andy McKaie of MCA and sound engineer Steve Lasker on the "Bing's Gold Records" package, I recently noticed another example of this which I had always overlooked before - - the manner in which Bing sang the title of "Play A Simple Melody," when he recorded it with his son Gary for Decca back in 1950. If you listen carefully to this, their first hit recording together, you will discover as I did that never once during the entire record does Bing sing the title as it was written. Bing always sings "... won't you play some simple melody... ", while Gary always responds with "... play a simple melody.." instead. Why Bing preferred his own version of the song title I have no idea. But no matter, it "sold a million," anyway!

BING CROSBY IN THE 40'S AND 30"S

Fellow ICC member Gary Hamann of Los Angeles has another bestseller on his hands with his latest book, "Bing Crosby in the 40's", which was previewed in BING 117 and is reviewed elsewhere in this edition. This detailed 200-page account of Bing's professional and private activities during the busiest decade of his career is proving to be very popular with Crosby collectors everywhere. American and Canadian ICC members can still order copies from me at the special discount price of $28.50 (postpaid), while supplies of this limited edition last. Members in the United Kingdom and Europe should order from Michael Crampton, and those in Australia and New Zealand from David Currington.

At my request, Gary Hamann also has reprinted a limited number of copies of an updated version of his first book, "Bing Crosby in the 30's as well. ICC members who have not yet ordered a copy may now do so for $23.50 (postpaid), while supplies last. But don't delay if you would like a copy of either of these unusual books about Bing's many activities during the first two decades of his extraordinary career.

NEW BING CD BOX SETS BY MAIL ORDER

I have been informed recently by Bob Zipkin of the Special Markets division of MCA-Universal in California of two new multiple-CD box sets of Bing's Decca recordings which have become available by mail order in the United States. The first is a 4-CD set released by Reader's Digest, entitled "Bing Crosby: His Greatest Hits and Finest Performances (MSD4-37118). Three of the discs feature a selection of Bing's well-known Decca recordings from the 30's, 40's and 50's. The fourth disc contains songs from radio shows that were previously released on LP and CD by GNP-Crescendo Records. Please refer to Jim Reilly's "Keeping Track," article elsewhere in this issue of BING for more specific details. This Reader's Digest set is a good value for the general public ($54.96 plus $5.00 postage and handling) and hopefully will be in their catalog for many years to come. It also is available on cassette tape for those who have not yet made the switch to compact disc. (Order from the Reader's Digest order Department, Pleasantville, New York 10570; or Telephone 1-800-846-2100).

The second box set licensed by MCA is entitled "Bing Crosby: 36 All Time Greatest Hits" (MSD3-37079). It also contains Decca recordings from the mid 30's to the 50's. Although most of the tracks have been released previously, several have not been available before on CD in the United States, including "Georgia on My Mind", "Memories Are Made of This", "Mona Lisa" and Bing's 1940 version of "Please". Copies of this box set can be found at some Walmart and Price Club stores, but not in regular music stores. They also can be ordered from Heartland Music, P.O. Box 85535, East Parham Road, Richmond, Virginia 23285; (or telephone 1-800-788-2400). The CD version is $28.98 plus $3.95 postage and handling, and the cassette version is $24.98 plus postage and handling. This is another good set for the general public and beginning collectors, and I would like to thank fellow ICC member Ben Clinkenbeard of Cincinnati, Ohio, for bringing this box set to my attention.

BING FEATURED IN NATIONAL MUSIC CATALOG

Collector's Choice Music, the largest mail order music company in the United States, featured Bing on the cover of its January 1998 catalog. In addition, Bing also was selected as the "Headliner" of the month for this catalog. The cover has a familiar color photograph of Bing wearing a gray hat and a red and black checkered shirt while holding a golf club. There also are special color advertisements on the inside cover for "Bing's Gold Records" CD from MCA, Jim Reilly"s fine "Memories" CD (with a nice plug for the International Crosby Circle), the Ken Barnes "Complete United Artists Sessions" box set from EMI as well as a set of twelve Philco Radio Shows on audio cassette. This is, by far, the best nationwide publicity for Bing's recordings in many a day, and it should result in excellent sales of the featured CDs and cassettes, as well as several other Bing CDs listed elsewhere in the 100-page, full color catalog. I have thanked the marketing director of Collector's Choice on behalf of the ICC for featuring Bing, which he appreciated. ICC members who do not already receive this mail order catalog should write to Collector's Choice Music, 900 North Rohlwing Road, Itasca, Illinois 60143, and ask to be added to their mailing list. It is a good way to keep up with new CD releases, including imports, of the big bands and popular singers of the 30's, 40's and 50's. And don't forget to tell them that the ICC sent you, and you would like to see more of Bing in future catalogs!

BING'S FAVORITE IRISH SONGS

Our fellow ICC member, Bob Zipkin of MCA Special Markets, has just released a new CD in his popular series of Bing's "Favorite Songs" in time for St. Patrick's Day. And once again, the ICC was closely involved with the design and production of Bing's "Favorite Irish Songs" (MCAD-21048). I would like to thank especially Jim Reilly and Ron Bosley for providing the great photograph of Bing for the front cover of this CD and for their general encouragement regarding this project. Purchasers of this new collection of Bing's Irish songs will be pleased to discover that, at my suggestion, MCA was able to include Bing's duet version with Ann Blyth of the 19th century ballad, "Oh! 'Tis Sweet to Think", which appears for the first time on CD. Also, Bing's rare, first 1944 recording of "Too-Ra-Loo-Ra-Loo-Ral' is featured as well.

Advance orders for Bing's "Favorite Irish Songs" have far surpassed MCA's expectations, so ICC members should be able to find copies in music stores throughout the United States. Prices will depend on where you find it, but should be in the $4.95-to-$7.95 range. Bob Zipkin and MCA deserve another round of thanks from all Crosby collectors and the general public for releasing this fine budget CD. I would also like to express my personal appreciation to Bob for the credit given to the ICC on the CD inlay sheet. Be sure and get a copy of this new CD for your Crosby collection.

BING ON TELEVISION

A few of Bing's films continue to appear from time-to-time on nationwide broadcast and cable television channels in the United States, but the frequency was rather limited this past holiday season compared with recent years. The annual favorites were shown again, of course, including "Holiday Inn", "The Bells of St. Mary's", "Going My Way" and "White Christmas", which are always welcome no matter how many times they have been shown. The Public Broadcasting System (PBS) even featured "High Society" recently, which is somewhat unusual fare for PBS these days. Also, a satellite cable service, TVLand (which, unfortunately, I do not receive myself) has been running a series of Flip Wilson's 30 minute television programs from the 1970's, several of which featured Bing as a guest star. Here is the list of Bing's films and television appearances that were shown nationwide during the past four months on networks in the United States including American Movie Classics, Arts and Entertainment, Cinemax, Fox, Showtime, Turner Classic Movies and TVLand:

November 1997
The Country Girl - Road to Bali - Road to Morocco Road to Singapore - Road to Utopia - Road to Zanzibar - Phil Silvers TV Show (Sgt. Bilko) - Flip Wilson TV Show (Bing Crosby and the Supremes)

December 1997
The Bells of St. Mary's - The Country Girl - Going My Way - Holiday Inn - Man on Fire - Robin and the Seven Hoods -White Christmas - Ed Sullivan TV Show (Holiday Special) - Flip Wilson TV Show (Bing Crosby, Tim Conway and Melba Moore)

January 1998
Going Hollywood - High Time - Road to Bali - That's Entertainment - The Adventures of Ichabod and Mr. Toad - Flip Wilson TV Show (Bing Crosby and the Supremes) - The Princess and the Pirate (cameo) - Son of Paleface (cameo)

February 1998
Blue Skies - A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court-Going Hollywood - High Society - High Time - Road to Bali - Road to Rio - Robin and the Seven Hoods - The Adventures of Ichabod and Mr. Toad - Flip Wilson TV Show (Bing Crosby, Tim Conway and Melba Moore)

I hope that we may look forward to the release of additional books and compact discs featuring Bing during the coming months. In the meanwhile, I would like to extend my best regards to all my fellow ICC members as another issue of BING goes to press. And don't forget to "Smile Right Back At the Sun" with Bing whenever possible until next time.

F.B. (Wig) Wiggins

(Editor: Wig's endeavours on behalf of us all are nothing short of remarkable and the success of the 'Bing's Gold Records' CD is very pleasing indeed. A review which appeared in newspapers all over the USA in December is shown and what super publicity! This serves to remind us that the public at large buys 'hits' rather than the rarer items we enthusiasts would prefer and after all the record companies are in business to make money.

New music

Bing's Gold Records ★★★
(out of 4) Bing Crosby (MCA)

Between 1937 and 1950, Bing Crosby racked up 21 No. 1 hits for the Decca label, a string that has never been surpassed. All of those original recordings have been collected on this nicely annotated set, which places the ever-adaptable crooner in an endless variety of settings: putting on the green with the Irish ballad "Too-Ra-Loo-Ra-Loo-Ral (That's an Irish Lullabye)"; cowpoking around "Don't Fence Me In" with the Andrews Sisters; gently swinging the marching tune "MacNamara's Band"; and, most effectively, accompanied only by Carmen Cavallaro's piano and a rhythm section, delivering a romantic "I Can't Begin to Tell You." Ba-ba-Bing! ★

— Terry Lawson, Knight-Ridder News Service

File photo, 1950

Bing Crosby, shown here in a 1950 publicity photograph for television's "Bing Crosby Show," piled up hit after hit for 13 years. A new CD collects them all together.

Bing does seem to be getting more exposure in the USA nowadays judging from other bits of stateside news from Ernest Sutkowski, Norman Wolfe and others. For instance:

1. 'Bing's Gold Records' was prominently featured in the Columbia House magazine.

2. The 'Audio Collection' catalogue for early Spring promoted the MCA set 'Bing Crosby: His Legendary Years 1931 -1957'.

3. The BMG Music Service magazine featured 'Bing's Gold Records' as the CD of the month in February.

4. The New York Times in the shape of Howard Thompson proclaimed 'High Society' as one of its movies of the week for February 8-14.

5. Radio station WLIM in Long Island has nominated 'Bing Crosby - The Complete United Artists Sessions' as one of the best compact discs issued in 1997. An article about this appeared in 18 Long Island newspapers.

6. Nathaniel Crosby was in the news in February when it was announced that he had joined Orlimar Golf Company as Executive Vice President. He had spent the last nine years as President of Tony Pena and Nicklaus Golf in West Palm Beach, Florida.

7. By agreement with Kathryn Crosby, Bing's former home at Hillsborough near San Francisco is scheduled to be opened to the public between April 26 and May

24 in order to raise funds for the Coyote Point Museum. Visitors will be able to see Bing's Oscar, his gold records and some of his hats. I do hope that some of our members will be able to visit the property and send us a report. The entrance fee is $30!
8. The NBC sitcom 'The Naked Truth' has been featuring a character called 'Bradley Crosby' (played by Chris Elliott) who is claiming to be Bing's illegimate son!
9. Here's a nice quote:

> "I don't know a whole lot about them to tell you the truth. Really, they might be great entertainers. Most of you have probably forgotten Bing Crosby and Rosemary Clooney and people like that, so I'm showing my age." — **BOBBY ROSS**, Lions coach, on the Rolling Stones, whose Silverdome concert forced the Lions to practice in a golf bubble.

So there's plenty happening and long may it continue.)

BOOKS 'N' BING

1. Bing Crosby in the 40's

As mentioned by Wig, this is Gary Hamann's follow up to his successful first volume about Bing in the 1930s. This time we are given a 200 page A4 size book with adverts for Bing's films of the period interleaved here and there. It is in the same format of Gary's earlier work and what a tremendous picture it creates of Bing's life. The casual and off-hand approach to the press is apparent but so is Bing's willingness to give time and energy to ordinary people, to the forces and to fund-raising events. Many of Bing's radio appearances are noted and there are reviews of all the films he made during the decade. Bing's frequent golf appearances receive attention as do some of the more dramatic items in his life, for example his house burning down in 1943 and his wife being rushed to hospital in 1945. The claim by the Crosby Research Foundation to have discovered a defence technique against the atomic bomb is covered too and in short this book is a must for every Crosby fan. It recreates for us the top years of Bing's career and it makes compulsive reading. Order your copy from either Michael Crampton or Wig Wiggins, details as per the flier enclosed with BING 117.

2. The Mississippi Rag - The Voice of Traditional Jazz and Ragtime

The October 1997 edition of this magazine contained a marvellous article by our member Arne Fogel entitled 'Bing Crosby and Jazz'. Spread over 7 pages, with 13 photographs as well, the article takes a look at Bing's career with particular emphasis on his jazz singing talents. This really is a very well written piece and I particularly like Arne's summing up.

"It should be obvious by now that when one discusses Crosby and his place as a seriously considered contributor to the jazz idiom, the notion of 'revisionist criticism' rears its head. Crosby's artistic reputation has, like Sinatra says in the song, been "up and down and over and out" in recent decades since the end of the 50s and the end of his period of universal public and critical acceptance. But the immutable evidence of Crosby's genius as an interpreter of popular song is, of course, on record. His jazz proclivities are apparent even in the most commercial pop ballads: a subtle twist of the melody here, a delicate rhythmic swing there, always reveal to the educated listener that Bing was a jazz man at heart. And of course, his timeless out-and-out jazz romps still so amply demonstrate his pioneering, exhilarating sense of swing. All that the eager student of jazz or pop history has to do to verify and validate the essential Crosby is to listen to those records...."

This is an important contribution to the published works about Bing and well done Arne! Bing appears on the cover of the magazine as well and if you want a copy write to :-
The Mississippi Rag Inc.,
MSB Center,
1401 W. 76th. St.,
Suite 250,
Minneapolis,
MN 55423.
Back issues are $2 per copy and payment can only be made by International Money Order or by cheques drawn on U.S. banks.

WHEN IRISH EYES ARE SMILING!
GIVE MY REGARDS TO BROADWAY!!
JIMMY CRACK CORN AND I DON'T CARE!
The Older Generation fights back.

TRADING POST

Entries are free for all items of Crosbyana and there is a nominal charge of £2 for non-Crosby advertisements. All items are printed in good faith and we cannot accept responsibility for any dissatisfaction arising from the transaction as a result of these entries
Please send all advertisements to the Editor

BING AT SENNETT (Vol 1)
NOW ON PAL VIDEO

Following the success of 'Bing at Sennett' Vol. 2 in the UK, Festival Films are pleased to offer volume one in a PAL format. Containing three excellent, restored videos of three of Bing Crosby's Mack Sennett shorts.
Blue of the Night
Billboard Girl
Dream House
60 minutes, VHS-PAL, from the Bob DeFlores collection. Price £15, post-paid in the UK, add £1 for delivery outside the UK.
A few copies of 'Bing at Sennett Vol 2' (£15 each) and 'Road to Hollywood' (£17 each) still remain as we go to print but don't delay. Copies of 'On the Road with Bing and Bob' are still available at the reduced price of £10 and members will recall that this video contains very rare films such as 'The Road to Home', 'The Fifth Freedom', 'The Road to Peace' and 'You Can Change the World'.
Order from **R. Dixon Smith,** 58/59 Stonefield, Bar Hill, Cambridge CB3 8TE to whom cheques should be made payable.

Brian Ford, 4 Price Way, Hampton, Middlesex TW12 3XD
"I am partially sighted so have RNIB talking books. They issue a magazine called 'Spotlight' which lists books in various formats for the use of blind and partially sighted people. In this January's issue is the following entry. Anyone interested should contact the RNIB Customer Services, P.O. Box 173, Peterborough PE2 6WS (tel. 0345 023153)"

AUTOBIOGRAPHY

CROSBY, Bing: **Call me lucky;** as told to Pete Martin. New introduction by Gary Giddins. Da Capo Press, 1993. Order No. X6856, 10 or 3 cassettes.

A candid portrait of a gifted American entertainer. Here Bing tells how he developed his unique singing style to produce a string of jazz and pop records. He tells stories about music, horses, golf, movies, and personalities – Bob Hope, Bix Beiderbecke, Louis Armstrong. It all adds up to a rich and absorbing story.

(Editor: I am aware that we do have several members whose sight is not what it was and the above advert could well be of real interest. By coincidence, in a recent letter, member Sylvia Crellin mentioned how Trevor Wagstaff reads the entire contents of each BING magazine on to cassette for her to listen to. A tremendous kindness by Trevor which Sylvia much appreciates.)

Noel J. Mould, 22 Brantwood Gardens, Antrim BT41 1HP
Noel is offering for sale an incredible list of LPs, 78s, books, programmes and some items containing Bing's signature. There are many 10" LPs and many EPs, the 'Bing's Hollywood' set is there as is 'High Tor', 'Music to Shave By' and many of the Australian Crosbyanas. There is a framed copy of 'I've Got The Girl', the 12" 78 'High Water' and too many 78s to list. A copy of 'Call Me Lucky' signed by Bing, over 40 of Bing's films on video (Pal system) and so on. In short, if you want something you're probably find it in Noel's collection. Write to Noel for details enclosing a large SAE and mention any particular wants.

Andreas Bauer, Himmelstr. 31, D-22299, Hamburg, Germany
"THE SUMMIT" for sale! Bing together with Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin and Sammy Davis Jr. on a very rare LP Reprise R-5031. LP & cover in excellent condition, please send best offer. Lots of other records available, send want lists. SAE/ICC

Graham Langley, The British Institute of Jazz Studies, 17 The Chase, Crowthorne, Berkshire RG45 6HT (tel. 01344 775669)
"For sale - Hundreds of books, thousands of magazines - send large sae (37p) for lists. Books include:-
Barnes - THE CROSBY YEARS - Elm Tree/Chappell - 1980
Bishop & Bassett - A-Z OF BING CROSBY - 1971 - pb - (marking)
Bishop & Bassett - BING - JUST FOR THE RECORD - ICC - 1980
Crosby - CALL ME LUCKY (abridged version) - Readers Digest - 1959 - (ndw)
Thomas - THE ONE AND ONLY BING - Michael Joseph - 1977
Thomson - BING - Star - 1976 -pb
Wanted - BING magazines 1-25, The Road To Bing Crosby Parts 1 & 2."

Allan Bevan, 11a Castle Walk, Southport, Merseyside PR8 2AR (tel 01704 500738)
Allan has Bing sheet music for sale at prices varying from 50p to £3 depending on condition. In addition, he has a Blue Skies piano selection featuring Crosby / Astaire / Caulfield which he will sell for £1.50 and he offers an autographed photo of the Andrews Sisters 5" x 7" signed 'Sincerely Andrews Sisters'. He also buys and sells movie memorabilia. Contact him direct for further details.

Mrs. K. Finn, 1 Savernake Rd., Woodley, Stockport, Cheshire SK6 1LG (Tel 0161-430-7001)
Mrs. Finn is faced with the task of disposing of her late husband's substantial Crosby collection. Ernie Finn was a long time ICC member and his collection includes 23 ten inch LPs (all in immaculate condition), over 100 12" LPs (including 'Holiday in Europe', 'Bing's Hollywood', 'High Tor', 'Beloved Hymns' and two rare ICC issues), many EPs, 45s and 78s, countless video and audio tapes (including the 15 part BBC programme about Bing), a copy of 'Call Me Lucky' which was autographed by Bing when Ernie met him in 1961 plus BING magazines going back over 30 years. He also had an extensive record

collection of other artists as well plus many years copies of 'Melody Maker' magazine. Ernie kept all of his collection in first class condition and ideally Mrs. Finn is looking for a single purchaser who will buy and collect the lot. Please contact Mrs. Finn direct.

Mr. K. Jupp, 29 Chase Rd., Burntwood, Staffs WS7 0D (Tel. 01543 682776)

Mr. Jupp received a letter from Bing dated March 31, 1945 in which Bing apologises for not being able to send a photograph due to material shortages. He goes on to mention that his latest film is 'Here Come the Waves'. Mr. Jupp is prepared to sell the original letter and would welcome any reasonable offers.

Vic Monk, 19 Danson Rd., Bexleyheath, Kent DA6 8HA (tel. 0181 303 3857)

"FOR SALE

The Longines Set of 6 LPs 'Bing Crosby's Treasury' £20 inc. postage

'The Very Best of Bing' Boxed set of 7 tapes. £12 inc. postage

About 55 or so 78 rpm records, all Bing, say £30 the lot but these will have to be collected from Bexleyheath.

If someone should come to see these, I can offer about 50 Bing LPs at £2 each, also a few tapes at 2 each and about a dozen Bing CDs at £3 each."

Ken Merry, 28 The Avenue, Bessacarr, Doncaster, South Yorkshire DN4 5JX

Ken put together a collection of Bing tracks entitled 'Early Film Songs Collection' for another nostalgia magazine and his cassette received a nice review. Ken is very happy to make the cassette available at £4 (inc. postage). Ken also offers the three hour tribute to Bing put out by Anthony DiFlorio III in Philadelphia last October. This fills two cassettes and Ken will supply these for £7:50 (inc. postage). SAE to Ken for further details of both offers.

Mr. B. Jones, 1 Gellihaf Rd., Fleuer de Lis, Blackwood, Gwent NP2 1RJ

WANTED

'My Life With Bing Crosby' by Kathryn Crosby - £12 offered.

Brunswick Record catalogue - any around 1950 - 1954. £10 offered.

Mrs. Pam Munden, 4 Kerry Close, Pennington, Lymington, Hants SO41 8HW (tel. 01590 677544)

Pam's father, ICC member Alf Mutter, passed away in February and Pam is now looking to pass on his record collection to someone who appreciates Bing's work. There are over 155 LPs and hundreds of 78s in the collection. Please write to Pam enclosing a SAE for details of what is available.

Collector's Choice, Archival Televsion Audio Inc., P.O. Box 88, Albertson, NY 11507, USA (Phone/fax 516 626-7731)

A library of over 7500 original television sound tracks from the years 1958 - 1979 is held by this organisation which offers cassettes of these programmes. Amongst the Bing TV soundtracks on offer are those from his shows of October 5, 1960, March 20, 1961, December 11, 1961, May 14, 1962, February 15, 1964, October 23, 1968, December 18, 1969, April 13, 1970, March 14, 1971, February 27, 1972, December 3, 1977, October 9, 1974, March 20, 1977, the two shows with Perry Como from 1960 and many more. A 275 page catalogue is available together with an audio cassette sampler of excerpts from 191 different TV broadcasts for $29.95 plus $3.95 shipping and handling.

Crosby Clubs Around The World

The ICC is pleased to be associated with the following Crosby Clubs. Please write to the addresses shown for further details.

Club Crosby, BINGANG

Wayne L. Martin, Editor

435 So. Holmes Ave., Kirkwood, Missouri 63122, USA

(HomePage:http://www.kcmetro.cc.mo.us/pennvalley/biology/lewis/crosby/bing.htm)

(Members in Europe should enrol via Ken Crossland, 9 Arden Drive, Dorridge, Solihull, B93 8LP)

Bing's Friends And Collectors Society,

Hobie and Cathie Wilson, 236 Andrieux St., Sonoma, California 95476-6909, USA (tel. 707 996 0257)

The Queensland Bing Crosby Society,

John Wright, 17 Thurecht Parade, Scarborough, Queensland 4020, Australia

The Victorian Bing Crosby Society

Bob Neate, 22 Pakenham St., Blackburn, Victoria, Australia 3130.

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OTHER APPRECIATION SOCIETIES

We have reciprocal arrangements with the following clubs and societies for publicity purposes. They kindly advertise our club in their magazines and we are very pleased to return the favour.

Sinatra Music Society, 183 Summerfields Avenue, Halesowen, West Midlands B62 9NU

This Society produces a most impressive magazine on a bi-monthly basis. The magazine includes features on all artistes performing quality popular music. The annual sub for UK members is £10 and write to Des Davis at the above address for details.

Sinatra Music Society, Dublin Branch, c/o Chris Hitchcock, 21 Roselawn Walk, Dublin 15, Ireland (phone: 01 8212418)

The Dean Martin Association, P. O. Box 80, Uckfield, East Sussex TN22 1ZR

The Sammy Davis Jr Association, c/o Paul Iacovou, 6 Thyra Grove, North Finchley, London N12 8HB

The Judy Garland Club c/o Anthony R. Scarrott, Flat 3, 25 Holland Rd., Hove, East Sussex BN3 1JF

The Doris Day Society, 31 Kirkfield Rise, Ambleside, Cumbria LA22 9DX

International Friends of Gordon Macrae, c/o Mrs. Pat Robinson, 47 Lea Mill Park Drive, Yeaden, Leeds LS19 7YH

Tony Bennett Appreciation Society, c/o Mark Fox, 13 Sunnyside, Heckmondwike, W. Yorks WF16 0LN

Pat Boone Appreciation Society, P. O. Box 63, Sunderland, SR1 1PN

Guy Mitchell Appreciation Society, 11 Kierhill Rd., Balloch, Cumbernauld, Glasgow G68 9BH

Frankie Laine International Appreciation Society, c/o Tony Cooper, 18 Napier Crescent, Seamer, Scarborough, North Yorkshire YO12 4HY

Alma Cogan Appreciation Society, c/o Stephen Woods, 9 Canterbury Avenue, Bowerham, Lancaster LA1 4AU

The International Petula Clark Society, c/o Terry Young, 38 Elmley Way, Margate, Kent CT9 4ES

KEITH PARKINSON'S
CELLULOID CROSBY

It was your editor's suggestion that I covered **Two for Tonight** for this issue of BING. I don't know when Malcolm first saw this 1935 Crosby picture. If he viewed it for the first time on television it would not be an experience inspired by the review in the **Radio Times Film and Video Guide**. That Derek Winnert volume stated, "a film so slight it will fade from memory minutes after viewing". The composers of the five Crosby songs in the film also faded from Winnert's memory. He wrote, "a good score courtesy of Marion and Storm". Mack Gordon and Harry Revel weren't around to protest at this misrepresentation. There were other protestations at Winnert's reviews however and the BBC had to make settlements with the compilers of other film review reference works when it was discovered that Winnert hadn't spent much time viewing the films he wrote about. He had gone to his book shelves and copied out the comments of other authors. The BBC did not proceed with their plans to publish the guide on a regular basis and Winnert's pay cheques from the **Radio Times** ceased when he lost his job of film reviewer.

The purpose of quoting from the **Radio Times Film and Video Guide** is to partly disagree with it anyway. I waited until 1979 to see **Two for Tonight.** The BBC screened a pristine print one spring Sunday afternoon forty-odd years after its initial release and I was struck by the light touch Bing brought to an unremarkable plot. His acting skills were beginning to show and Paramount could be assured that the Crosby name on a cinema marquee would bring in the punters no matter how weak the film. As befitted such a slight story the film's running time was 61 minutes and the movie was on cinema screens within three months of the cameras starting to turn on the Paramount lot. In the film's hour Bing averaged one song every twelve minutes, and every one was a winner. They have timeless appeal. They were *Two for Tonight, From the Top of Your Head, I Wish I Were Aladdin, Without a Word of Warning and Takes Two to Make a Bargain.* That quintet of songs is sufficient to contradict Winnert's "fade from memory" prediction because I think the 1935 audience would leave the cinema with the tunes being whistled and hummed.

Whether the plot of the film also stuck in the mind could be debated. The first clue to its silliness is the fact that Paramount acquired the property as an unproduced play by Max Lief. Its understandable that the play never saw the light of day in a theatre, although no doubt it came cheap to the studio. It was then fashioned into a screenplay by George Marion, jr. and Jane Storm. They were the couple Winnert assumed to be the composers of the film's songs. Incredibly, established writer Harry Ruskin was then brought in to provide "additional dialogue". It was Ruskin who provided most of the dialogue for Universal's **King of Jazz** a few years earlier. The outcome of this three handed screenplay was a story about how plays such as the one written by Lief come to exist. It tells of Bing coming from an impoverished family and pursuing an ambition as a composer only to discover that he is making overtures to a deaf song publisher. Salvation comes from the sky when a plane piloted by leading lady Joan Bennett lands in a tree occupied by a vocalising Crosby. By way of recompense Miss Bennett arranges for Bing to write a play to be staged by her producer. The unimaginative Crosby writes about his encounter with Bennett and the play (and film) achieves a happy ending because it includes a romance with the lady.

The film's director was the undistinguished Frank Tuttle. He was Paramount's third choice after Lewis Milestone and Leo McCarey had both passed on the project. Perhaps they had read the script. As for the cast, apart from Joan Bennett, who was an established star - having appeared in **Little Women** the previous year as well as being Bing's leading lady in the recently released **Mississippi** - the other players were drawn from the Paramount stock company. At this stage of his career, Bing simply took on whatever assignments were put his way. Nor did he query the requirements of the studio's wardrobe mistress. He did not look uncomfortable in a tuxedo for the film's opening credits. He spent one day in August, after filming was completed, to record the Gordon-Revel songs for Decca. After that it was vacation time and he travelled to Saratoga and ended up buying some thoroughbred horses.

Joan Bennett and Bing - 'Two for Tonight'

The film premiered at the end of August and contemporary reviews also remarked on the poor story. Typical was Variety, the show business bible. That paper's judgement read:

"No wow....the songs, the fetching title, the competent cast and mostly Crosby will have to offset the other deficiencies."

The British release took place over a year later, which was par for the course in the mid-thirties. Surprisingly the

usually caustic Graham Greene liked what he saw and told **Spectator** readers, "a very amusing and well-written entertainment." Whether critical opinion influenced regular picturegoers in those days is doubtful. A night out at a city centre super cinema was value for money. For between 10d and 1/9d there was a supporting feature, a newsreel, a cartoon and an organ interlude to prop up the big picture no matter how dreadful it was.

The supporting feature could be a tiresome affair on occasion. If you saw **Two for Tonight** on its provincial release in the November of 1936 you will have sat through **Marry the Girl.** That film satisfied the Board of Trade for quota purposes and it was slightly superior to the typical "B" picture of the time. Since the end of the silent era, it had become increasingly obvious that audiences preferred the slick Hollywood product to our home grown idea of what constituted an entertaining motion picture. In order to boost the British film industry the government decided to force cinemas to show a percentage of British films. The passing of the Cinematograph Act in 1927 set the British quota at 5% but by 1935 it had reached a height of 20%. This led to the production line manufacture of shoestring budget films by minor British studios. Film renters would by-pass minor British productions unless they were compelled to hire them. These quota quickies, so called because they were shot in a few days, went round the provinces in tandem with quite respectable American features. This satisfied government regulations. In London the West End cinemas showed these British quota films first thing in the morning, sometimes whilst the cleaners were still in the auditorium, in order to fulfil their legal obligation without foisting dross on audiences paying considerably more than the provincial 10d. By 1938 the problems created by the 1927 Act were obvious. Cinema screens were being filled with cheap rubbish from the smaller British studios. So a new act was passed which established a minimum standard for films before they could be distributed as part of the quota.

Marry the Girl was probably good enough to meet that requirement of the Act of the following year. Anyhow, patrons were paying to see the new Bing film. Probably more by luck than the ability of the film's booker to select a suitable support for **Two for Tonight,** this British comedy starring Sonny Hale and Winifred Shotter was in keeping with the mood of the main film. It was actually eight minutes longer than the Crosby picture. An Equity British Production, it told of a daughter being made to sue her fiancee although they were in love with each other. Lightweight stuff and just the thing to complement the fluffy **Two for Tonight.**

Sandwiched between **Mississippi** and **Anything Goes, Two for Tonight** did the business for Paramount, which was no surprise to the studio whose books showed Bing had been their biggest box-office drawer since the previous year.

Keith Parkinson

THE A-Z OF BING'S MOVIES

We continue with our stroll through Bing's film career.

HOPELESSLY IN LOVE Song. This was one of two songs Leo Robin and Frederick Hollander wrote for the 1956 version of **Anything Goes.** It was not used. The songwriters also composed **Am I Awake,** which was similarly by-passed.

HOPKINS, MIRIAM (1902-1972). Actress. She played Curly Flagg in **She Loves Me Not** (1934) and although she did not get Bing in the end - that honour went to Kitty Carlisle - it is her praise of Bing which results in his being reinstated as a student to Princetown university. She had been a contract star with Paramount for the previous four years and had made a massive impact on audiences and critics alike in the best version of **Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde** (1932). The year after her Crosby film she moved to Goldwyn and in 1939 to Warner Bros. It was at that studio that she made her best remembered films, usually as a blue-eyed blonde floozie. Her forties successes included **Virginia City** (1940), **Old Acquaintance** (1943) and **The Heiress** (1949). She descended to taking character roles in the early fifties and her last released film was **The Chase** (1966).

HORNBECK, WILLIAM (1901-1983). Film editor. The pace of Bing's Mack Sennett shorts fairly zips along. Into a running time of twenty minutes a plot and four songs unfold in what were supporting films which must have eclipsed the popularity of the main feature on occasion. Credit has to be given to the editor who assembled these two-reelers which are still entertaining us today. Hornbeck worked on them whilst employed as supervising editor for Sennett. He met his boss in 1916 when he came to work for Keystone as a lab assistant. By the time he was working on the Crosby featurettes he felt he could do better. So in 1934 he came to England to work for Alexander Korda, where he was put in charge of editing. He returned to the States at the outbreak of war and his only other Crosby credit came with **Riding High** (1950). His best work followed: **A Place in the Sun** (1951), Shane (1953), and **Giant** (1956). By 1966 he was vice-president of Universal.

HORNBLOW, ARTHUR, Jr. (1893-1976). Producer. He produced two Crosby films: **Mississippi** (1935) and **Waikiki Wedding** (1937). The former was one of the first responsibilities he took on after joining Paramount from Sam Goldwyn. He married Myrna Loy between his two Crosby assignments and moved to MGM in1942, the same year the two were divorced. He was involved with some good films including **The Asphalt Jungle** (1950) and **Oklahoma!** (1955).

HORSE THAT KNOWS THE WAY BACK HOME, A Song. In a scene in **Dixie** (1943), Bing as Dan Emmett performs his minstrel act with his colleagues but sings this Johnny Burke - James Van Heusen song solo. Bing never made a studio recording of the song and he did not feature it in his radio shows. If you don't have **Dixie** on video then the privately issued Australian LP "Going

Hollywood, Volume 8"which contains the musical soundtrack of the film is your only chance to sample this seldom heard Crosby vocal.

HORSE TOLD ME, THE Song. On the other hand this other Burke - Van Heusen composition had reasonable exposure on disc and radio. It comes from **Riding High** (1950) and is given a spirited rendering by Bing and assorted party goers when the film's plot make it seem as though financial difficulties are a thing of the past.

HORTON, EDWARD EVERETT (1886-1970). Actor. Strictly speaking EEH was only in one genuine Crosby picture: **Paris Honeymoon** (1938), although he was third billed after Douglas Fairbanks and Bebe Daniels in the 1930 **Reaching for the Moon.** Bing was shoehorned into that picture to perform *When the Folks High up do the Mean Low Down.* In **Paris Honeymoon** he played Ernest Figg, the butler to millionaire cowboy Lucky Lawton (Bing Crosby). He specialised in manservants or sidekicks and was on view throughout the late thirties in similar roles in the Fred Astaire/Ginger Rogers RKO musicals. He made about 150 films and his befuddled performances could brighten the most ordinary movie. My own favourites from his first three decades in Hollywood are **Ruggles of Red Gap** (1924), **Lost Horizon** (1937) and **Here Comes Mr. Jordan** (1941). The opportunities for Horton to display his type of humour diminished after the second world war and the last thirty years of his career generally found him in less memorable films.

HOT TIME IN THE TOWN OF BERLIN Song. Bing's 1944 recording of this John De Vries - Joe Bushkin song was heard on the soundtrack of the Dennis Hopper film **Tracks** (1976). It was sung by Frank Sinatra in **The Shining Future** (1944) a short which also featured Bing.

HOUSE THAT JACK BUILT FOR JILL, THE Song. A delightful ditty cut from the release print of **Rhythm on the Range** (1936). Would it really have mattered if this Paramount picture ran for three minutes longer than its 85? It was recorded for the soundtrack as a duet between Bing and Frances Farmer. Thankfully someone lifted it from the cutting room floor and it surfaced in the mid 1970s on a record album of songs similarly excised from Hollywood musicals. Bing's solo recording of the Leo Robin - Frederick Hollander song was issued by Decca at the time of the film's release.

HOW DEEP IS THE OCEAN Song. Bing sings this song in **Blue Skies** (1946). He performs it at a nightclub in an off-stage setting with the help of an on-stage chorus. Like all of the songs in the film it was written by Irving Berlin. Bing had recorded it successfully in 1932 and by the time the film was made it was regarded as an evergreen.

HUSSEY, RUTH (1914-). Actress. Fourth billed in **Mr. Music** (1950) she played Bing's fiancee Lorna Marvis, but she didn't get her man. Nancy Olsen won Bing and we didn't much mind because the appropriately named Hussey was mercenary and eventually settled her affections on a multi-millionaire. She was usually the second female lead in films of the forties and eventually made a greater impact on the Broadway stage, which was where her career began before she was discovered by MGM in 1937. Before **Mr. Music** her most notable film role had been in **The Philadelphia Story** (1940) for which she received an Oscar nomination as the cynical magazine photographer. The remake, **High Society** (1956) cast Celeste Holm in that part. After her solitary appearance in a Bing picture her best part was in her last film to date: The **Facts of Life** (1960).

Betty Hutton takes the long way home with Bing in 'Here Come the Waves'

HUTTON, BETTY (1921-). Actress, singer. Miss Hutton starred with Bing in one film and in a ten year timespan shared the same reels of film with him on a further four occasions. Her "proper" Crosby picture was **Here Come the Waves** (1944) where she made a double impact as Susie and Rosemary Allison. Some people would regard one Betty Hutton as too much but at this stage of her career she was not as frenetic on screen as she was to become on phonograph record. In the other Crosby related films she was only in the same scenes as Bing in **Duffy's Tavern** (1945), in which she sang in the chorus which accompanied Crosby on *Swinging on a Star.* She soloed *His Rocking horse ran away* and *He says 'Murder' he says.* The other three films were:

- **Star Spangled Rhythm** (1942). She was Polly Judson, the film's main character
- **Hollywood Victory Caravan** (1945). Short. As herself
- **The Greatest Show on Earth** (1952). As Holly, the film's leading lady.

She was part of a further link with Bing when she married choreographer Charles O'Curran. He was her second husband and worked on **Here Comes the Groom** (1951) and **Road to Bali** (1953). O'Curran was behind one of her increasingly temperamental tantrums. She walked out of her Paramount contract when the studio refused to bow to her demand that he directed her future films. She had been with that studio since 1941 and her 1952 departure meant she made only one minor film before her descent into obscurity. That was **Spring Reunion** (1957). She did make a start on the 1967 western **Red Tomahawk** before quitting. Since then she has made the news fairly frequently. She is a favourite of the popular newspapers and magazines because of her antics, such as:

- filing for bankruptcy after spending an estimated $10 million
- marrying (and divorcing) five husbands
- cancelling performances when she appeared in stage productions in attempts to revive her career
- being discovered working lonely and broke as a cook and housekeeper in a Rhode Island Catholic rectory
- hospitalisation for intensive psychiatric care
- acting as a greeter at a Connecticut jai-alai establishment

None of this should detract from the enjoyment she gave to millions of cinemagoers when she was at her peak in such successes as **Annie Get Your Gun** (1950) and **Somebody Loves Me** (1952). Don't write off this 77 year old lady just yet. She may yet return to the pages of the sensation seeking tabloids. For the record, her sister was big-band vocalist Marion Hutton (1919-1986).

HYAMS, LEILA (1905-1977). Actress. She was the female lead in **The Big Broadcast** (1932). She played the secretary to George Burns and she was in love with Bing. But Bing had other ideas and played the role of matchmaker by uniting her with Stuart Erwin. She was in the same promotional short as Bing the following year when both made brief appearances in **Hollywood on Parade No 7.** At the time of making **The Big Broadcast** she had been a dependable feminine addition to films since the silent era. Her best acting part immediately preceeded her Crosby movie when she was the heroine in **Freaks** (1932). She was married to talent agent Phil Berg and she retired in 1936. There was no enticing her back to acting and she enjoyed a further forty years out of the limelight.

HYMER, WARREN (1906-1948). American character actor. Leslie Halliwell described him as usually taking the part of "a dim witted gangster". His three Crosby films endorse that. If proof were needed consider his character's names. For **She Loves Me Not** (1934) he played Mugg Schnitzel. In **Rhythm on the Range** (1936) he was Brain. And in **Birth of the Blues** (1941) he answered to Limpy! Just so that you'll recognise him next time you see him on screen, he was the gangster assigned to kill Miriam Hopkins in his first Bing picture. In typical Hymer fashion he made a hash of things and captured Judith Allen instead. He never rose above the typecasting roles he was assigned in his films with Bing. By way of evidence, a sample of his non-Bing films reveal titles such as **Baby Face Morgan** (1942) and **Joe Palooka, Champ** (1946).

BING -A DIARY OF A LIFETIME

Plenty of mentions about the diary on local radio since the last edition and some very nice correspondence as well. Gary Hamann quickly answered my query about the date of the Gershwin Memorial Concert when he wrote:

> *"The question of the date of Bing's appearance at the Gershwin Memorial Concert is answered by Robert D. Saunders' review of the concert appearing a day after the event in the June 19, 1942 issue of the Hollywood Citizen-News. Bing was reported as singing 'Somebody Loves Me'."*

Thanks, Gary and a lot more detail about the event can of course can be obtained from Gary's new book 'Bing Crosby in the 40s' which is reviewed elsewhere in BING. Peter Cakanic of North Augusta was another who wrote:

> *"I saw Bing once at the "I am an American Day" celebration in Chicago. I couldn't remember exactly when. I knew I was 14 or 15. And there it is on page 38 of the diary. It was May 16, 1943 and I was still 14. That's Chicago Mayor Ed Kelly lighting Bing's pipe. Funny about me going to that celebration. I was just getting into Bing. My voice was changing and I tried to drop my voice down to my shoelaces to get a bit of a Bing sound (no dice though). And to tell the truth the main reason a buddy and I went to Soldier Field was to look at the Lincoln Zephyrs, Cadillacs and Buick Roadmasters in the dugouts. When a cop chased us out of the dugout, we came out not far from the bandstand. Bing was MC. When he introduced Paulette Goddard and she hopped on stage, he gave her a friendly pat on the rear (non sexual). I can remember he sang 'White Christmas' and when he got into 'As Time Goes By' a small plane flew over causing Bing to ad lib 'Sinatra will do anything to ruin my act'."*

These recollections do much to flesh out some of the entries in the diary and I am keen to receive more from members. Also we have picked up some further snippets of dates involving Bing from several members and here are a few extracts from recent additions to the diary.

1930

Jun 27 (8:30 p.m.) Rhythm Boys begin a new NBC radio series from station KFI. The show is sponsored by the Union Oil Company. Walter O'Keefe is the m.c.

Jul 15 Gala opening night at the Hotel Ambassador's Cocoanut Grove as Gus Arnheim returns to the venue. Bing becomes a singing sensation when the Rhythm Boys are featured with the Arnheim Orchestra at $100 each a week.

1933

Dec 5 Prohibition ends as Utah becomes the last state to ratify the 21st. Amendment. (entered under 1932 in printed diary in error).

1935

Oct 4 Bing is stopped by police when driving at 42 miles an hour on N. Highland Avenue (a 25-mile zone) and is given a speeding ticket. This is Bing's second ticket in six months. The officer notices that Bing has a revolver and when Bing cannot produce his gun permit he is asked to drive to Hollywood police station. His explanation that he had forgotten to carry his permit is accepted and Bing is then allowed to continue to Paramount Studios.

1937

Feb 1 (7:00 - 9:00 p.m.) Bing is one of many stars taking part in a Red Cross Relief Program on the Blue Network. The show is designed to raise funds to help with the serious flooding in Tennessee, West Virginia, Ohio and Kentucky. He sings 'One, Two, Button Your Shoe'. Al Jolson, John McCormack and Clark Gable are also on the show.

1939

Apr 8/9 Bing is at Palm Springs and plays tennis at the Racquet Club. Errol Flynn, Paul Lukas, Charles Farrell, Frank Morgan and other film stars are also in attendance during the weekend.

1941

Apr 18 (4:30 - 5:00 p.m.) Bing guests on Alec Templeton's Variety Program on NBC.

1944

Mar 2 Bing's KMH show. The guests are Lucille Ball and Marilyn Maxwell. (Omitted in error from the published diary)

Sep 2 (add to existing entry) Bing and his troupe then travel to Ridgewell in Essex where a concert is given in T2 Hangar between 9:30 p.m. and 10:30 p.m. for 381st. Bomber Command.

Sep 3 Having stayed overnight at Ridgewell, Bing travels to the air base at Raydon in Suffolk where he puts on a show during the afternoon for the 353rd. Fighter Group. He then goes on to London by staff car.
Nov 14 Bing guests on Bob Hope's radio show on NBC.

1945

May 29 Bing guests on Bob Hope's radio show on NBC with Herbert Marshall.

1948

Oct 4 Stars in the Community Chest National Campaign Variety Show with Jack Benny, Bob Hope, Eddie Cantor and Marlene Dietrich. The show is broadcast over the ABC network.

1952

Jan 15 Bing guests on Bob Hope's radio show with Jimmy Demaret and Jerry Colonna.
Nov 10 (9:30 - 9:45 a.m.) Bob Hope's new morning radio show premieres on NBC. Bing is thought to have made a brief appearance.

1954

Nov 21 The Thanksgiving Hour, a radio programme broadcast over the Mutual Network, features a story called 'Miss Clara' and Bing takes part together with Ethel Barrymore, Pat O'Brien and Perry Como.
Nov 21 The weekly CBS radio show, The Hallmark Hall of Fame, broadcasts a memorial tribute to Lionel Barrymore and Bing is understood to have made a contribution.

WELCOME HOME!
to California's Own
GUS ARNHEIM!!!
Returning to the AMBASSADOR
"Cocoanut Grove"
with a rhythmic, melodic dance-inspiring organization including two great singing trios, splendid quartette, vocal soloists, steel guitar section, and a magnificent ensemble of 19 musicians and entertainers including . . .
EDDIE BUSH
with Russ Columbo and Art Fleming
The THREE RHYTHM BOYS
-formerly with Paul Whiteman's Orchestra
BING CROSBY HARRY BARRIS
AL RINKER
BOBBY BURNS Quartette with Ed Landry, Danny Stewart and Walter Holzhaus...all outstanding musicians
... Also Wm. Ellfeldt, Jimmie Grier, Stanley Green, Ted Krise, Bob Perry, Ernie Anderson, Lou Shurtliff and Norman Taylor
Gala Opening Night
TUESDAY EVENING, JULY 15
Dinner de luxe $6.50 per person inc. couvert or a la carte service

1956

Apr 26 (add to existing entry) Also goes to see Elvis Presley perform whilst in Las Vegas.

1976

Aug 17 Records four more songs at the Decca studios in London. Three of the songs are not issued until after Bing's death. (Omitted in error from the published diary).

The 1930 entry gives us the precise date of Bing's debut at the Cocoanut Grove and I am again indebted to Gary Hamann for the copy of the advert which appeared in the Los Angeles Examiner on July 10, 1930. Interesting to see that Russ Columbo is billed before Bing! The 1944 entries come from member Chris Way who continues to uncover fascinating details about Bing's visit to the UK in that year.

I have been corresponding with author Philip Evans about both his 1975 version and his forthcoming book about Bix Beiderbecke and in a letter to me he said:

The Old Gold programs were jotted down by Warren W. Scholl, as he listened to the radio programs. He sent me the programs, each tune and who was featured on the selection, through the Bix years. I did not request the programs after Bix left the band. When I started to research my Frank Trumbauer book, I contacted Warren and asked if I might have the balance of the programs for my Tram book. He told me he had tossed them out, not feeling they were of interest to anyone. I about cried. But he did!

Let me give you the information on Bing for the first programs of

Old Gold when Bix was in Davenport recovering from an illness.
February 5, 1929: 13 tunes played this program, but with Bing we have:
MAKIN' WHOOPEE: Bing and Rhythm Boys vocal.
LET'S DO IT: Bing vocal.

February 12, 1929: 15 tunes played this program. Bing is not on this show.

February 19, 1929: 13 tunes played this program.
WHERE THE SHY LITTLE VIOLETS GROW: Rhythm Boys vocal.
WHEN SUMMER IS GONE: Bing vocal.

February 26, 1929; 12 tunes played this program.
I'LL GET BY; Bing vocal
CASTLE IN SPAIN: Bing vocal
MISSISSIPPI MUD....and....SO THE BLACKBIRDS AND THE BLUEBIRDS GOT TOGETHER: Rhythm Boys.
YOU WOULDN'T FOOL ME WOULD YOU: Bing vocal.

Thanks, Philip. Priceless information which would have been lost forever if you hadn't shared it with us. The song 'When Summer is Gone' seemed to be one of Bing's specialities at this time. See the 'diary' entry for December 23-29, 1928.

Earlier I mentioned Gary Hamann's new book and I picked up some new items for the diary from Gary's book as well as gaining information which enabled me to expand existing entries. Inevitably a few queries were raised as well which have set me off on the research trail again. Incidentally, I am constantly updating the master copy of the diary which I hold on computer so all new information is gratefully received. I should very much like to know more about several periods in Bing's life and it needs someone with access to local newspapers for the area in question to fill the gaps for me. For instance, can anyone help with the following:
(a) The Spokane newspapers of 1924 and 1925 must contain references to the activities of the Musicaladers and then of Bing's appearances at the Clemmer Theatre. How fascinating it would be to dig out some of the facts of that period.
(b) Between February 10th. and 24th., 1942, Bing and Bob Hope were on a fund-raising golf tour and visited Phoenix, Houston, Dallas, Fort Worth, Corpus Christi, San Antonio and Sacramento. There must be some superb coverage of this tour in the local newspapers.
(c) May 5 - 20, 1942 First the Hollywood Victory Caravan tour to Chicago, St. Louis, St. Paul, Minneapolis, Des Moines, Dallas and Houston. Bing then goes to Louisville and Nashville. What did the papers say?
(d) August 5 - 16, 1942 Bing is again selling war bonds and this time he visits Fort Lewis, Tacoma, Seattle, Spokane, Boise, Cheyenne, Colorado and Kansas. We don't have many details but the press would have covered the tour.
(e) September 10 - 30, 1942 Fund raising for the Hollywood Victory Committee in locations such as Chicago, Indianapolis, Kansas City, Tulsa and Youngstown. In all he is said to have played over 70 camps and given over 25 golf exhibition matches but we don't know much about them.
(f) March 9, 1943. Bing is injured in Phoenix, Arizona. What did the local paper say about it?
(g) May 1 - 31, 1943 Bing is again entertaining servicemen in locations such as El Paso, Dallas, Atlanta, Chicago and Nashville. He must have gone to other places as well and can we discover these by looking at reports in newspapers from the places we do know he visited?
(h) May 26 - June 17, 1945. More war bond selling activities. This time Bing visits Chicago, Cleveland, Philadelphia, Topeka, Washington, Boston and Salt Lake City. Press cuttings of the events would be welcomed.

Do any of our USA members live near any of the places named and if so would you be willing to go into your local library and look up the newspapers of the day and see what you can find? We can really advance our knowledge of Bing's career if members are prepared to research these events and we shall produce a unique record of the times. I look forward to hearing from anyone who can help and as an example of what is possible, we reproduce below an article recently uncovered by Lionel Pairpoint in the Boston Sunday Post from June, 1945.

Malcolm Macfarlane

Twelve Hour Day Fails To Slow Up Bing

Mobbed By Bobbysoxers - Plays Golf Match - Sings For Wounded Vets - Ends Up Fresh As Ever

Mobbed by bobbysoxers wherever he went, Bing Crosby went through a gruelling twelve hour schedule in greater Boston, yesterday, to wind up as airy as ever at the bedsides of paralysed war-wounded, at 8 o'clock last night, ready with a song and a gag, despite the fact that he had attended a ship launching, played a stiff exhibition golf match, starred at a Bond Rally, signed (by actual count) 1754 autographs and gone without supper so that he could sing for the wounded. A less durable personality would have wound up halfway through the schedule with his nerves dragging on the floor but Bing had to be told it was the patients' bedtime at Cushing General Hospital in Framingham to stop him and he went to take a train to Washington where, today, he wil be presented the GI Oscar award, at Walter Reed Hospital, for his USO entertaining tours in Europe.

He arrived in Boston at 8 o'clock yesterday morning and at 8 o'clock, last night, after being on the move for twelve hours, kidding, tearing his tonsils, signing autographs, pushing his way through hordes of adoring bobbysoxers, most of whom are ex-Sinatra devotees, there wasn't a

wrinkle in the gaudiest sports outfit ever to dazzle the myopic eyes of conservative Boston. An ensemble made up of shrill green sports shirt, tile trousers and shrieking, plaid socks. He wore this to sell bonds, launch a cruiser, play golf and cheer the wounded and it was so dazzling that such veteran golfers as Jesse Guilford and Fred Wright, who wouldn't miss a putt if a battery of cannon were fired at them, at the crucial instant, went completely off their game. At the Seventh War Loan Bond Rally, on Boston Common, 60,000 people struggled to get near the Parkman Hands bandstand and autograph hunters left their footprints up the backs of bluecoats, struggling to remove Crosby in one piece from the bandstand.

At Commonwealth Country Club, where he played an exhibition match with his host for the day, Governor Tobin, Jesse Guilford, former National champion and Fred Wright, former State champion, under the auspices of the PGA Soldiers' Rehabilitation Fund, a crowd of 4,000 went storming around the golf course, as Crosby gave his opponents a neat lesson in golf, copping three birdies and a score of thirty for seven holes in which par is 28. Jesse Guilford, his nearest competitor, scraped through with a 34. Wright drew 36 and Governor Tobin extricated himself, in times of serious trouble with a 37. The gallery spent most of its time trying to thrust pieces of paper and pencils into Bing's hand for autographs and offering gratuitous advice like, "Use your Number 9, Bing, on this one" but if a golfer can be a hero to his caddy, Bing rated young Bill Curley, 13, of 8 Menlo Street, Brighton was practically speechless with hero worship. A $10 caddy fee and an autograph which testified "To Bill a fine boy - Bing Crosby" Bill a class 'A' caddy, whose name was drawn from a hat, to carry the Crosby clubs, usually takes a dim view of golfers and tenders very autocratic advice to the best of them about what club to use but he took one look at the whistling drive down the middle of the fairway, from the first tee and clammed up. "I don't think much of his singing" said Bill, "but he could be the National champion".

It was when Bing went to Cushing General Hospital in Framingham to sing for the wounded that he really hit his stride. With Tony Peters, guitar player from Hotel Statler, as his only accompaniment, flanked by Governor Tobin, he had the wounded, tearing their stitches with laughter. Back from one USO tour and ready to go on another, Bing demonstrated that he is as GI as K rations and considerably funnier. "I've got tough competition", he said, "here in Massachusetts - the governor looks like a movie star and the movie star looks like a guy who calls for the laundry". Our Mr Ryan, the demon cameraman, spent hours crouched in fantastic poses, trying to catch a typical shot of Crosby. Finally, Bing broke off in the middle of a song to enquire, "Are you practising or are you taking a picture?"

When the performance in the Red Cross Auditorium at Cushing General was over, Bing asked to be taken to the toughest ward in the hospital and he was taken to where the paralysis cases are treated and there he went from room to room. In one room, Mrs Doris Bethel of 23 Forest Street, Milford, was sitting quietly, by the bedside of her husband, Pte Elbert Bethel, who was seriously wounded in Germany. "Hi! Bert", said Bing, "How's it go. My name's Crosby". The soldier stared, unbelievingly, at the movie star. "Where's Bob Hope", he finally asked. "Busy", said Crosby, "Romance - he's taking over Errol Flynn's overflow". "This is my wife", said the soldier. "What's her favourite song?" asked Bing. "She kind of liked 'Always'." "That's what she'll get," says Bing and without accompaniment, sat down on the soldier's bed and sang the song, softly, just for the two of them. Or Capt. Seth Frear of Long Island, New York, he had a pipe gripped in his teeth. "Got that pipe coloured up nice", said Bing, "anything I can do for you?" "How about some of your tobacco" said the soldier. Bing opened his tobacco pouch, poured some into an envelope and handed it over. "May kill you", he said, "I call it Old Hoof Parings. I get it off the floor of the blacksmith's shop where I have my Percheron's shod". That's the way it went until bedtime at Cushing General when Bing finally dashed off to catch a train. It takes quite a guy to be equally regular crooning to bobbysoxers, in the club house locker room and trying to tell wounded men how he feels about them without getting maudlin. Especially, when a feller goes in for shrieking colours in shirts, trousers and socks. Underneath the gaudy ensemble was Bing Crosby, a regular guy. I have young Bill Curley's word for that - you can't fool a fifteen year-old caddy. 1 also have Pte Elbert Bethel's word for it - you can't really fool a man who is awfully sick and has plenty of time to think.
(Boston Sunday Post 10th June 1945)

(Editor: See what I mean? What a life Bing had in those days and what heart-warming stories they are. I'd like to see more, wouldn't you?)

MEMORIES

John Bignell (who is anxious for a follow up CD as soon as possible) offers a few thoughts on the 'Memories' CD together with unstinting praise for those involved in its production.

I feel I must applaud the hard work and careful thought put into the creation of this CD. The re-mastering job on these old recordings reflects great credit on those responsible for the finished article. Analysing the individual contents with my own extensive (but by no means complete) collection, I have the following observations.

There is only one title that I do not have - 'The Four Winds and the Seven Seas'. This has previously appeared just once, and that was on a Readers Digest Boxed Set and was the only Bing item on the set. So this is a real 'first' for most collectors, I would imagine. No less than seven titles have appeared only on Australian and other privately produced LPs. I refer to 'Walk Me By The River', 'I Didn't Slip, I Wasn't Pushed, I Fell', 'The Girl with the Pigtails in Her Hair', 'Memories', 'The Girl Friend', 'Helpless' and 'A Quiet Girl'. This means only those members lucky enough like me to have these rare LPs in their collection will previously have had access to these titles. (Discount

78 rpm records and those long lost old 10" Decca LPs possessed by probably just a handful of veteran collectors).

Eleven titles appear on just one LP in my collection so they certainly do not get too many plays by me. A further four titles appear on just two LPs each in my possession. 'When the World was Young' and 'I'll See You in My Dreams' both appear on three LPs of mine. This leaves just one title 'When Mother Nature Sings Her Lullaby' which has previously appeared on CD. This was first issued on the JSP CD 'On Treasure Island' in 1993. So, all in all, a really splendid collection and I am sure Ken Barnes, Peter Reynolds, Leslie Gaylor, Jim Reilly and Alan Hodgson of MCA can feel rightly proud of their 'team work'. We can only hope that sales of this splendid CD will indeed justify a further collection of rarer Bing selections as outlined by Leslie Gaylor.

Moving on to the realms of pure conjecture and in order to satisfy my own desire to obtain those some seventy titles I still do not possess on any LP or CD, may I respectfully suggest a further twenty six CD package which would really delight me and. I am sure, fill many gaps in most collectors title needs.

Connecticut
Sweetly She Sleeps My Alice Fair
Feudin' and Fightin' Swing Low Sweet Chariot
Gotta Get Me Somebody to Love
That Little Dream Got Nowhere
I Don't Want to Walk Without You
The Last Mile Home Just One More Chance (1939)
Way Back Home Kentucky Babe
What a Little Moonlight Can Do Moonlight Cocktail
What Am I Gonna Do About You
My Old Kentucky Home
When the White Azaleas Start Blooming
Nell and I
You Sang My Love Song to Somebody Else
Nobody's Darlin' But Mine
You Got Me Where You Want Me
Oh! How I Miss You Tonight A Friend of Yours
Old Black Joe When the Organ Played 'Oh Promise Me'
Peckin' Without a Word of Warning (1951)

As far as I know none of the above titles have appeared on LP or CD. If this article elicits any sort of enthusiastic response I will be delighted. If the above titles eventually appear on a new CD, I will be ecstatic and I may then reveal the some fifty further titles whose appearance on CD would complete my collection of all Bing Crosby's commercial recordings.

John Bignell

(Editor: As mentioned by Leslie Gaylor, a Volume 2 of 'Memories' is under consideration and suggested titles have been submitted to MCA. The parameters are that there should be some well known songs (to attract the public at large and not just the collector) and that a fair proportion of the songs should still be within copyright (i.e. less than 50 years old) as this stops competitors copying MCA. Jim Reilly and his team have borne these considerations in mind whilst naturally trying to include the kind of song John seeks.)

One Sweet Letter From You

Members' views, opinions and comments are always welcomed and we have great pleasure in reproducing some of the letters received since the last issue

Lachlan McLean, 8/37-39 Letitia St., Oatley, NSW 2223, Australia

Thank you for publishing my letter and newspaper clipping in the most recent edition of BING. I always look forward to the arrival of the magazine and it was great to receive it before Christmas.

I was interested by the reference to 'Candle in the Wind' as I have been pursuing this matter with The Guinness Book of Records. When I sent my letter to Sydney's Daily Telegraph, I used Fred Reynolds' statistics from Vol. 3 of The Crosby Collection concerning the sales of 'White Christmas' (by the way, I made reference to Fred's book but the editor neglected to mention this.) After this was published, I managed to obtain a 1993 edition of the Guinness book. This edition stated that Bing Crosby's version of 'White Christmas' had sold 170,884,207 copies by 30th. June, 1987 in North America only. In recent newspapers, it was claimed that The Guinness Book of Records had recognised Elton John's 'Candle in the Wind' as the biggest seller of all time with 31.8 million sales. When I contacted Guinness Publishing about this matter, they admitted that they had used the figure of 170 million +, but as there was no evidence to back up the claim, the entry reverted to an estimated 30 million sale. These statements by Guinness Publishing beg a couple of questions:

1. If there was no evidence to back up the 170 million+ claim, why was it published in the first place?
2. If the 30 million figure is only an estimate, why is it even in the book?

As members of the International Crosby Circle, it is our duty to investigate this matter, as there is a major discrepancy.

(Editor: I can only agree with Lachlan's comments. The 170 million figure was quoted in BING 103 when Stan White was advised by the Irving Berlin office that "the figure published of 170,884,207, for North America, is a computer read out of royalty units paid, the units are for sheet music sales and records, and not just records as published.....The estimated sales figure for the records of around 100,000,000 is going to be nearly correct..." In other words, the Irving Berlin

office was talking about all versions of the song plus sheet music sales. Clearly that figure cannot be used to certify Bing's sales of the song and it would appear that the office did not have a separate breakdown of royalties received in respect of Bing's versions of the song alone. MCA ought to have been able to produce a more accurate figure for Bing's sales but they have not been able to help. Incidentally, the publicity about 'Candle in the Wind' did specify that it was the biggest selling single but other publicity suggests that Michael Jackson's album 'Thriller' has sold 45 million copies. However my money is still on Bing's 1947 version of 'White Christmas' being the biggest selling song of all time and Trevor Wagstaff is locked in correspondence with the Guinness people to ensure that its success is properly recognised even if it is only as the 'Biggest Selling Christmas Song'.)

Alan Hewitt, 51 Nutgrove Hall Drive, Nutgrove, St. Helens, Merseyside WA9 5PT

I was interested to see your response to Bill Livesey's letter in BING 117. Please could you confirm that Bing missed 'When You Wish Upon a Star'. I have recently seen in two different discographies of Bing this song listed and if memory serves me right, one date was 1940 and the other 1941. Is this a mistake? I have always used the discography section in Ken Barnes' " The Crosby Years" where it is not listed and I have had great faith in this discography.
(Editor: I cannot trace that Bing ever sang this song anywhere and I have confirmed to Alan that the listings he has seen must have been incorrect. This song from Disney's 'Pinocchio' was a hit for Cliff Edwards in 1940. Bing did sing the other popular song from 'Pinocchio' namely 'Give a Little Whistle' a couple of times on the Kraft Music Hall which makes it even more surprising that he missed out on 'When You Wish Upon a Star'. I think that it would have suited his voice of that time too.)

Bill Ewert, Wood Nymph, 7 Elfin Drive, Ferndown, Dorset BH22 9QG

The August issue of BING certainly had the effect of producing nostalgic memories. Certainly I can vouch for the authenticity of Ralph Harding's comments on what happened to him on arrival at Honolulu Airport because the same thing happened to me in November, 1979 when we arrived there for a retirement holiday. I doubt very much however that he could have been kissed by a girl as beautiful as the one who kissed me. For years afterwards my wife complained at my meanness in not purchasing a photograph of the incident. The beautiful lai which was placed round my neck was made of real flowers including orchids which graced our hotel room for a week. We stayed at the Sheraton Hotel where the band leader was Trummy Young the trombonist referred to by Bing in 'Now You Has Jazz'. There had been some kind of tribute to Bing which had been on going for some months but it had unfortunately ended by the time we arrived. I do recall however visiting an exhibition of portrait paintings by Red Skelton which were of professional quality.

Our return to Los Angeles provided the opportunity of visiting Bing's grave which was completely bereft of flowers. Unfortunately the shutter of my camera which had been repaired shortly before our visit jammed again. The weather I recall was very hot with the sun blazing down from a clear blue sky and with Christmas decorations appearing everywhere caused me to comment that "The Americans must be mad". However on our arrival at Heathrow with gale force winds and torrential rain I had to say "It is not the Americans who are mad. It is us."

Fellow member Bert Day who resides in that sun drenched tropical paradise of Dalbeattie in Scotland and I have co-operated in listening to many of the radio presenters whose names appear from time to time in this magazine. In our view none of these come within streets of the recently retired Gerry Didymus at Radio Solent. His knowledge of the big bands, popular singers and music hall artists borders on the phenomenal. I recall on one occasion saying to him "Undoubtedly the definitive recording of 'I Can't Get Started' is that made by Bunny Berigan but do you know who first introduced it?" Without hesitation he replied "Bob Hope on Broadway in 'The Ziegfield Follies of 1936'". Naturally I never attempted to catch him out again. Gerry always included a Crosby Corner in his programmes and towards the end although he also prepared big band programmes it was left to somebody else to present them. I believe that I am correct in saying that after 40 years of service to the BBC both in radio and television, Gerry eventually retired without a word of thanks. Another reason, if indeed one was needed, why the respect and admiration I held for the BBC from 1927 until the mid 60s has turned to contempt.

Mrs. Eileen Knight, 57 Burlington Rd., West Bromwich, B70 6LE

I've just added two CDs to my Bing collection 'Memories' and 'The Complete United Artist Sessions'. When I saw in the acknowledgements that members of the ICC had helped, I knew why they were so good. Twenty years since Bing died doesn't seem so long. I've been a Bing fan since school days and I'm 61 now. I remember with great happiness receiving tickets for his Palladium show in 1975 but the morning they came, I was told I had cancer. Those tickets made me fight back and each day the doctor said "we shall have you out in time to see Bing" and I was. It was his last show and I had a seat with the family in the third row from the front. It was really wonderful, he was on stage all night, so perfect, so warm and friendly. His voice was perfect and it all went so fast.

I was also lucky enough to get tickets for his Palladium show in 1977 - another unforgettable night. It was so sad how the papers tried to pull him to pieces after his death, after all he was only human and like us all did his best. He gave us fans a more than fair deal. When I wrote to him he always took time to reply. He sent along a large signed photo to me which sits in pride of place in my home. I shall always remember with a warm heart seeing

him that last time in 1977.
(Editor: What a nice story. Bing certainly did look after his fans as witness this story from a much earlier part of his career.)

Mrs. Helen Ley, 405 Cedar St., Harrisonburg, VA 22801-1513, USA

This past May I was able to visit the Crosbyana Room at Gonzaga and see Bing's items on display and was happy to see Bing's pipe that I had donated to be on display for all to see. I had received the pipe almost 50 years ago after my writing a letter to Bing after WW2 ended and asking him for one. One did arrive at my home and it has written on the stem, close to the bowl 'Best Wishes, Bing' which is in white ink. Collectors in this country wanted to buy it from me but I never came to naming a price in monetary terms for I never wanted to sell it. My youngest son suggested I give it to Gonzaga but I thought they would have a collection of Bing's smoking pipes and therefore was surprised when Stephanie Edwards said she would be most happy to add the pipe to what was in the Crosbyana room as a pipe they did not have. I saw it still in the case my husband made for it and it is in a larger case that displays Bing items with a photo of Bing, pipe in hand, behind said pipe.

In 1944, I spoke to Bing over the phone when he was a guest at the Hotel, Waldorf-Astoria in New York City. I made the call from my dad's silversmith shop which was located about two streets from the hotel. I realise some of Bing's fans would have gone to the hotel, but calling him and his answering the call himself was enough of a surprise to this fan and whenever I hear his speaking voice I always remember when he talked to me alone! During the war years, I did some pencil drawings of movie stars and used whatever paper I could get my hands on. Naturally, I did one of Bing and sent it to the address that appeared in one of the movie magazines at that time. He autographed it for me, signing it 'To Helen, Sincerely Bing Crosby'.

I belonged to the Club Crosby here in this country during the war years and was actually astonished that fan clubs still were existing. My personal eye doctor has told me how his mother in her younger years was actually the President of Club Crosby and she always told her family in later years what a charming man he was and how he would be in touch with her when he was in New York and she lived in New Jersey. This news was nice to hear as we have heard so much against Bing, especially after Gary Crosby wrote 'that book'.
(Editor: Good to read descriptions of these events from Helen who some will know was the lady who helped publicise Bing's involvement in the building of the Front Royal stadium in a television programme.)

Peter Green, P.O. Box 164, Beaconsfield, Tasmania 7270

I am a member of the Ulysses club of Australia which is a club started a score of years ago to cater for elderly motorcyclists like myself. The joining age is fifty and the only requirement is that you hold a current motorcycle license. Within the club I have acquired the nickname of 'Bing' owing to the fact that I never miss an opportunity to push the barrow of the best singer-entertainer in the world. I have purchased a 1987 Honda Goldwing and of course when you are lucky enough to own a Wing you generally give it a name and I couldn't go past 'Bing's Wing'. As the Wing is equipped with a stereo radio-cassette it turns a few heads when you ride down the street with the voice of 'The Great Cros' blasting forth. When it is parked in the street many people are intrigued that Bing still has a big following around the world.

Incidentally congratulations for the beautiful quality production of Bing's diary. You certainly must be proud of your effort and rightly so.

Stan White, 57 Stanley St., Rothwell, Kettering, NN14 6EA

Tim Morgereth's book from 1987 which is a 78 discography, filmography and radio programmes listing, has been very useful to me ever since I purchased it. There are mistakes but it has however provided a lot of useful information which I have not been able to obtain elsewhere. If Tim wishes to have another go, good luck to him because that is no different to John McNicholas wishing to start again from scratch from 1926 onwards with Jonzo on CDs. I can see no harm in the publication of Lionel Pairpoint's tome about Bing's radio career, there is room for all. As for Reg Bristo, he was a good friend, but my goodness he did hold strong views about his likes and dislikes and he did sometimes, because of his bias on certain subjects, fail to present a balanced outlook in the magazine. However, Reg knew my thoughts on that, and our agreement on many things ensured that we did not fall out. As I have said, I have found Tim's book useful, and that is all that matters.

'Forgetting Bing' from the Chicago Tribune by Howard Reich, probably does reflect the Bing situation in much of

America, I seem to recall Ralph Harding saying much the same some years ago. It has been obvious for a long time that in this modern boozy, criminal, drug crazed, loud mouthed world, that the likes of Presley and Sinatra do fit the bill, because of their private lives, and if their private lives mean more than their music, then Crosby fans need not feel left out, because Bing's music leaves the rest of them in the shade. This does not mean I do not enjoy the music of Sinatra, Como, Haymes etc., also Doris Day, Peggy Lee, Judy Garland and so on. Whether the article is correct about easy-going middle of the road performers not capturing the public fancy long after they are dead, is a bit of a puzzle, because in this country, dozens and dozens of LPs and CDs have been issued over the years, and they keep coming, featuring Al Bowlly, who kicked the bucket during an air-raid on London in 1941, and Al was pretty easy-going in his singing. In nearly every CD outlet, you will find many albums by Nat King Cole on sale today, again not exactly a man who compared to Sinatra's ring-a-ding lifestyle. So while the article does put forward some reasonable thoughts on the subject, it does not really get to the root of the matter.

The Winter BING is excellent, as usual. Looking at that 1956 BCS meeting photograph of members just shows how faces change with passage of time.
(Editor: Thanks Stan. Many members will not be aware just how much work Stan does in promoting Bing with various radio presenters in the UK. He and also Maggie Ryan are tireless in their endeavours and they get very many Bing items played on radio which can only be beneficial to the Crosbyana cause in general. We can all play a part in this and can I issue an appeal to any of you who regularly listen to the radio, to write to your favourite presenters and ask them to play Bing records. If you can get some publicity for the ICC too this would be a real bonus.Another to pick up on Howard Reich's article was Doreen Heasman.)

Doreen Heasman, 76 Longland Drive, Totteridge, London N20 8HL

As a recent recruit to the ICC, I must express my admiration for the magazine - I'm stunned by the amount of work which obviously goes into its production!

I felt I had to comment on the article 'Forgetting Bing' by Howard Reich reproduced in BING #117. He asks why one artist remains an icon while another fades quietly into history, and suggests it depends on the subject's lifestyle. I would suggest that it is more to do with clever management and media manipulation. Since the 1960s, we've had countless examples of performers of limited talent made into 'legends' by this method, and probably the most outstanding example of the success of the media projection and public brainwashing is the elevation to sainthood of the late Princess of Wales!

Sinatra, Nat Cole and Ella Fitzgerald are beloved by most producers and presenters on Radio 2, and those three are heard every single weekday and (especially Sinatra) several times on Sundays (and I don't think Nat or Ella had scandalous lifestyles!). Bing, on the other hand, is virtually banned from its weekday output because, in the words of the Controller of Radio 2 "...he is of a previous generation.... and more likely to be heard on Sundays." Radio 2's output is increasingly aimed at an ever younger audience, and as the small amount of time devoted to quality music consists mainly of the above mentioned three and a few others, they are constantly exposed to a younger audience (and even an older one) whilst Bing is encouraged to 'fade quietly into history'.

How could Bing be described as 'bland'. His charm and personality were surely as much responsible for his phenomenal popularity as was his voice. Even his speaking voice was far from bland. Does a 'thrusting, swivelling pelvis' really add up to charisma? The real-life Crosby must have had charisma judging by the number of considerably younger women with whom he was reported to have been romantically involved!

So "Crosby's world began to diminish in 1941 with the arrival of....Sinatra." This before the 'Road' series and his Oscar-winning 'Going My Way', not to mention 'Holiday Inn' with a certain well-known song. Sinatra was still playing second fiddle to the likes of Gene Kelly and actually began to fade into oblivion until making a comeback in 'From Here to Eternity'. Even in 'High Society' Bing got top billing whilst Sinatra came third after Grace Kelly. I saw this film at the Empire, Leicester Square and remember the audience clapping after 'Now You Has Jazz', the only time I ever heard that happen in many years of film-going. Some 'relic'.

The difference in treatment of Crosby and Presley 20 years after their deaths has more to do with the difference between the highly commercial Gracelands and the peaceful, tasteful Crosby plot in Holy Cross Cemetery.

John Martin, Oaklands, Hall Walk, Easington Village, Peterlee, SR8 3BS

Jack Larman in the letters pages raises an interesting proposition i.e. can modern backing be used to enhance Bing's early hits. As you say Malcolm, it is probably too difficult and commercially un-viable but nevertheless a subject for prolonged discussion. Personally speaking I doubt if a big band backing would be the right format for the intimate casual style of Bing at his best. I think that Bing was pretty well served by John Scott Trotter and just listen to the backing on 'Amor, Amor' - well nigh perfect and I could name many more. Nevertheless there are undoubtedly many Crosby records which surprisingly didn't reach Gold Record status. 'Moonlight Becomes You' is an obvious example where a more inspired backing would have rounded off a superb vocal. Jack has indeed raised a subject worthy of future discussion even if it is only of academic interest.

Few Crosby fans would disagree when I say that 'Holiday Inn' is incomparably superior to 'White Christmas'. So why is the inferior product paraded year after year every Christmas? Why is this obvious fact never mentioned in

The film that starred Bing Crosby, left, and Fred Astaire inspired Kemmons Wilson to name the hotel chain he founded 'Holiday Inn'

our BING magazine. No doubt you will say that Technicolor is the main reason but that is not a valid excuse. Since becoming a member of the ICC in the 1980s, I have made up for lost time by reading as much as I can about Bing's career. Not one, I repeat one critic has said that 'White Christmas' is the better film. When Bing died in 1977, I crossed my fingers and hoped that the 'Holiday Inn' version of Bing introducing 'White Christmas' would be televised. Thankfully common-sense prevailed and consequently the song reached number four in the charts. Our friend June Manton rightly bemoans the fact that Bing's life and works are not celebrated as they should be (BING 117) and Howard Reich, the Tribune Art critic echoes her sentiments. Don't we all!

I enclose a cutting from The Times of 1st. January (See above) which describes how one Kemmons Wilson dreamt up the idea for the Holiday Inn chain of hotels having been inspired by the Bing Crosby film. I am pleased that somebody knows how to market a good product when he sees one. Incidentally, I am delighted to see that the James Stewart film 'Its' a Wonderful Life' has become such a perennial favourite. No Technicolor needed here!

(Editor: Thanks for your thoughts John. My own view is, as you expected, that it is indeed the colour that has made 'White Christmas' the more familiar on TV. The cutting about the Holiday Inn chain states that it is now the brand name for the world's biggest lodging chain. In this country, Bass own the franchise apparently. The founder, Kemmons Wilson is now aged 85 but still owns seven Holiday Inns in the Memphis area.)

George Patmore, 53 Severn Way, Cressage, Shropshire SY5 6DS

Whether Bing's recording of 'Hey Jude' is among the worst ever records made - or among the best - is simply a matter of opinion! A disc jockey's statement that it is in the former group does not immediately make it a statement of fact. With today's mass media, something stated long enough, loud enough and often enough becomes accepted by many people as their own opinion or more dangerously, as fact. Again the now long established custom of channelling music e.g. Radio 1 all 'pop', Radio 3 'classical' and so on means that the listener is spoon fed a like collection and repetitive exclamations of '"fab" and such like leaves opinions being handed to them as fact.

The art is to play the record, use your own audio system (called ears) and using your own personal computer (called a brain) make your own judgement - simple really - then you will have made a personal opinion, whatever the verdict. I long for the day when some enterprising entrepreneur hits on the idea of opening a radio station called 'Across the Spectrum - musically'. It would be a great opportunity for the listener to "take some, leave some" and thus create a wider personal taste in music. The present system means that youngsters are never weaned musically. This, along with the fact of anno domini, is a major reason why Bing is heard comparatively less than most "newer fellas". In my opinion, Bing, whatever the musical currency exchange has always been on the gold standard - occasionally 9ct. maybe - but always well above par.

John Fleming, 12 Middle St. North, Driffield, East Yorkshire YO25 7SN

I enjoyed the Winter mag. Full of variety and surprises too, always something new because of research by a great team who keep digging and finding something else to marvel at regarding Bing and the many sides he had.

I am a Burma Star holder, having been in the Far East for 3 years 10 months. My Regiment was the 9th. Field Regiment RA. 20th Indian Division. I have often wondered if there are any other 9th Fielders in our Bing ranks because we have an annual reunion every September in Worthing, Sussex. If there are any other 9th. Fielders reading this, please contact me and I will give you further details of our reunion.

LIONEL'S LINES

"YOU'RE LIKE A SWEETHEART OF MINE'

The romance with America began at a very tender age, as a child of The Depression. Not one of those minor dents in the economy that crop up, with the regularity of Leap Years and which demonstrate a slight slackening in the sales of Toyota Previa's and Ford Galaxy's or PC's and their peripherals. This was the "Big One" when "people carriers" were known as "trams" and the only "web site" was behind the gas stove in the scullery. When ex-servicemen from World War 1, whose disabilities were painfully apparent, haunted the pavements, squeezing popular tunes of the day from a variety of instruments. There was the one-armed cornet player and the man on crutches who still contrived a pleasant tenor to his own clattering accompaniment, on spoons. In retrospect, however, I harbour certain misgivings regarding the "Totally Blind", violinist whose swingy rendition of, "If I Had A Million Dollars" had me sufficiently impressed, to beg a small coin from Mum which I shyly dropped into the velvet bag, hanging from the neck of his fiddle. This was acknowledged with a gruff, "Thank you, sonny" and we must charitably assume that his affliction had served, in some uncanny fashion, to heighten his other senses, enabling him to recognise unspoken, "Youth".

There were others. The man selling the pot-menders who never spoke, with the lower half of his face, masked by a woollen scarf, even on the warmest day and the chap labelled, "No Dole" chanting, in rhythmic cadence, "Pennier packeter greaseproof, pennier packeter lunchbags". Self-descriptive notices were the order of the day and a few words relied upon the reader's imagination to flesh out the sad story -. "No Means Of Support" "Out Of Luck" - "Wife And 3 Kids". My weekly patronage went to a gentleman who displayed no visible handicap, apart from what appeared to be a dead dog, tied firmly to his ankle, with a length of hairy string. In this instance, it was the dog who wore the placard which said, quite simply, "Spot". Maybe this was an early example of subliminal advertising because there were those who would approach and whisper, "Spot?" and be rewarded with an imperceptible movement of the rib cage or the slight tremor of an eyelid. In turn, this would trigger the vendor to glumly, announce his wares from the corner of his mouth - "'Mer'can Comix, Mer'can Comix". Now, it may surprise our Transatlantic cousins to hear that the "Funnies", supplied gratis, with their Sunday newspapers, were sold on the streets of London but my puzzlement is, "Where did they come from?". The supplies seemed to be inexhaustible and at a halfpenny (for regular buyers), any profit margin, minute.

Nevertheless, these, coupled with visits to The Electric Palace, nourished my juvenile infatuation with the United States. This is not to say that I believed that all Americans lived in Gasoline Alley and might bear striking resemblances to the Toonerville Folks or The Gumps. Or that they perpetually grinned their way through life like Smilin' Jack. Or spoke like Lil Abner and the Yokums - "Yo is a stranger hyar, hain't yo" or for that matter, the Katzenjammer Kids, (I still ponder - were they Jewish or German or an almost incomprehensible blend of the two?) - "Vot about if ve sock Mister Chesse Chames mit a plonk on der nobber". Mind you, there was a dire parental threat to cut off the "Mer'can Comix" when I came out with, "Ya wanna make sumpin outta it" but I suspect this was a by-product of the movies, rather than Joe Palooka.

Whilst being aware that these were only far-fetched products of the artists' imaginations, as always, I was the instant dupe of those occasional advertisements, requisitioning cartoonless space and telling me what to expect should I be fortunate enough to visit that wondrous New World, across the "Duck Pond" ... "Gee! Dad, it's a Winchester! - A genuine firearm!" What a supplement this would have made to an eight-year old's armoury, whose ultimate deterrents, at the time, consisted of a peashooter and a potato gun. "Aunt Jemima's Pancake Flour" would surely have guaranteed pancakes every day, instead of an annual, Shrove Tuesday treat and look at this, they have actually named a model train set after me. In addition, there were obviously, some very easy pickings to be had, "C'mon Boys and Girls. Fine Presents Are Sure To Be Yours. For Selling Only 24 Packets of 'Garden Spot' Seeds At 10 cents a Packet and Returning $2.40 To Us, Claim A $10 Prize Typewriter Plus $10 For The Best Letter On This Machine". There couldn't have been some sort of a "catch", could there?

Putting aside some of the less edifying imports or the "you say, 'armlet' and I say, 'omelette', lets-call-the-whole-thing-off syndrome", I'd just like to thank Uncle Sam for the funny papers which (possibly) improved my vocabulary; for the Hays Office which (debatably) shaped my morals and for that massive contribution to popular music which (happily) still lightens my life. A more tangible opportunity to express my gratitude arose when we received a request from our Stateside correspondent for an article on the Crosby and Jolson duets and it may have been churlish of me to answer, "I think not. It's all been done before", until it was pointed out that we continue to gather new members (including more than 60 from the US in the past year), who might not be so familiar with the sensational response to the pairing of Harry and Asa. So here goes:

Regrets are often expressed that the duo only cut two sides together for Decca but I would respectfully submit that if anyone should undertake a revision of the completed Discographies, some forty duets which have now, all been issued, in one form or another to the general public, would need to be included. The material

originates from the twelve radio programmes on which they appeared together, in the late Forties and early Fifties. Al guested on five Philco and five Chesterfield shows, with Bing making a nostalgic return to the Kraft Music Hall, on two occasions when the series was hosted by Jolson.

Much has been written regarding the resurgence of Jolson, at that time, due to the unprecedented interest generated by the two Columbia movies which wove glossy, Technicolor versions of his life story, even if there was a teenage identification with the Larry Parks impersonation rather than the actuality but little can be found in the written biographies regarding his radio association with Crosby. Charles Thompson's, "Bing" offers a baffling account, obliging us to conclude that the author didn't know his Kraft from his Philco.

Two men could hardly have presented more dissimilar public faces. The braggadocio Al, "The World's Greatest Entertainer"; "I got so much dough that fourteen guys couldn't spend it in their lifetimes"; "Wait a minute, folks. Wait a minute. You ain't heard nuthin' yet'; "With the salary I get, if I work a week, you'll live a year" This, counterbalanced by Bing's prodigious modesty, "Just a broken down crooner who can read a line and has some sense of comedy timing"; "I took the smallest (billing) I could get - you last longer that way"; "People think that I'm humble or wallowing in humility when I resent being called a 'legend' - It's just being realistic because I know I've never done anything that merits that, "A hundred and fifty million ?! I never made that much. I figure, after taxes, my estate will be around one point two million."

A psychologist would probably say, that both attitudes were opposite but typical defences against the basic insecurity that bedevils many top performers and whether this be true or not, in each case it was decidedly difficult not to believe what they were saying. It is claimed that one was an early influence on the other but there was a sharp contrast in their vocal styles. Jolson larruped his audiences with the lyrics, often lapsing into spoken, emotional histrionics - "Mammy ... Mammy... I'm comin'... Aaah ... I ... I hope ... I hope... I didn't make ya wait..." It might just as well have been called, "Hammy" but they loved it and came back for more. Whereas, Crosby eschewed the dramatic gestures and dusty knees and ignoring the challenge, "It's a sad day when Jolie needs a mike to sing into", embraced the microphone, relying on shrewd under-playing to get his message across. Both approaches prospered and songwriters queued for their attentions.

The first aural evidence of an encounter between the two singers, occurs at the celebration of the opening of NBC's Hollywood Studios, in 1935 but History advises that their paths had first crossed as early as 1921, at a Tacoma theatre, where Jolson, already a top performer, starred in "Sinbad" while Crosby, inconspicuously earned a crust, as a part-time stage hand. It is improbable that any words were exchanged at the time but this did not prevent the scriptwriters from weaving an unlikely fairy tale around the event for the couple's first skit together on Philco Radio Time. Was it lack of research or the stars' memories that caused them to create an anachronism by changing the show from "Sinbad" to "Bombo"? On 4th January 1928 they both took part in the same nation-wide broadcast when Jolson, in New Orleans, sang five songs and Bing

Bing and Al at work.

made his minimal contribution to "Changes" with the Paul Whiteman Orchestra, from New York. But, in 1947, as you will see, a new alliance clicked from the word "Go":

"Crosby and Jolson read like a good combination and sounded as well, spinning on Philco's half-hour platter, last week (15th). No question that it was among the top and best shows Crosby has done for his new sponsor. The programme was good, principally because the crossfire between the pair, stood up. For it was a cinch that with these two guys there wasn't going to be much wrong with the singing. The comedy premise was a switch back to a dressing room with neophyte, Crosby, calling on the star, Jolson to 'try out'. Of course, they had to be a little careful about just how early they keyed the sequence, in order to skip having to blow out the footlights. But the comedy writing job stood up and had a good 'tag' of Jolson telling Crosby that if Paramount does "The Crosby Story" he will be glad to do for him what he did for Larry Parks. Previously, they had teamed on "April Showers"; "Rosie"; "The One I Love Belongs To Somebody Else" and Jolson had whipped across "Swanee" alone, in Hit Parade tempo with a dynamic orchestra which guarantees to get him out of any jam and does..... Perhaps the surprise part of the broadcast was when Crosby and Jolson were taking turns splitting a chorus. It wasn't always easy to distinguish who was singing, especially in the lower registers. A singing commercial by both, also was, inevitably, funnier in the studio than over the air, as it came through not as the pause that refreshes. Yet the combination can obviously stand a repeat, anytime. Most everybody thought this would be a good one - Twas!" ("Variety" 22nd January 1947)

Admirers of either singer may find it laughable that there could be any difficulty in differentiating between their voices. Maybe the critic was listening to a radio of lesser fidelity than a Philco!

The next quote is made all the more incredible by being what appears to be a rare eye witness report:

"Bing Crosby and Al Jolson made another record for a broadcast which will be heard on March 5th. I thought after their recent great show that Bing and Al shouldn't try it again. Why not leave superb alone? However, I went to watch them make the record and I take it all back! They should continue doing broadcasts together. The records would be best sellers and also collectors' items. Bing Crosby and Al Jolson are the greatest combination I've ever seen in show business. It was interesting and thrilling watching them work together. Bill Morrow, who wrote the show and put it together, rates plenty of credit. I came in at the start of the rehearsal. There was Bing, nonchalantly drinking a bottle of milk and eating a chicken sandwich. Al was already at work, running through a song with the orchestra. 'I haven't sung much since I was here last,' said Al, 'so don't expect much'. Crosby smiled. These two performers of entirely different styles and generations have great admiration and respect for each other. There is absolutely no display of temperament. I did notice a slight difference from the initial broadcast. Crosby acted more like a fan entranced by Jolson, which is really something coming from the great Crosby. When Al did his solo, 'Rockabye', Bing went into the control booth and listened to him. After Jolson finished, Bing said, 'I wish 1 could sing like that guy.' Later, to a group, Al said, 'I never met anyone like Bingie. He's in a league by himself.' After they had done the broadcast, Bing couldn't contain himself any longer. He leaned over and kissed Al. Jolson never looked so pleased. They are a mutual admiration society in themselves which may be why they are so great together. If you thought the original broadcast was great and thrilling, well, in the words of a fellow I know, you ain't heard nothing yet!" ("Hollywood Citizen News" 25th February 1947)

The superlatives flow! And how about, "He leaned over and kissed Al". This hardly paints a picture of the cold-hearted crooner that some would have us believe or is it merely an example of journalistic hyperbole for an arm around the shoulder or a "Well done".

A slightly daring experiment came next when, augmented by the presence of John Charles Thomas, the entire programme was scripted as an old-time Minstrel Show and Bing's solo of "Nobody" from this show, already holds an accepted place in the Discographies. Once again, the praise is unstinted:

"Revival of the burnt cork era on the Bing Crosby Show (2nd) on ABC with Al Jolson and John Charles Thomas as guests was one of the stronger packages delivered by Der Bingle since he espoused the cause of transcriptions. The informality, knowing humour and sophisticated and yet respectful ribbing of minstrelsy by a set of experts, created a mood that warmed old-timers who have memories of Dockstader, Primrose et al and gave the youngsters a look see into a theatrical form that's long since gone. Mixture of old-time tunes and 'Who was that lady you wuz with last night?' cracks hit constant bullseyes as far as laughs and sentiment were concerned. The duets, trios and solos by the participants produced the essential nostalgic atmosphere and even Ken Carpenter's commercials took on the mood of the rest of the show" ("Variety" 4th April 1947)

And five weeks later.

"Bing Crosby and Al Jolson in their now familiar act with an assist from Irving Berlin, really wrapped it up last Wednesday (7th) on Der Bingle's ABC platter show; parlaying nostalgia and sock showmanship for a bang up half hour session..... Jolson and Crosby sweetened their harmony with everyday and they really got together on the Berlin medley. It's radio's top parlay today, bar none and if Philco has that kind of dough to kick around next season, a Bing/Jolie permanent team- up could be a sure bet for Number One spot in the 1947/1948 Hooper sweepstakes." ("Variety" 14th May 1947)

Their next meeting was aired on 16th October 1947 when Bing visited the Kraft Music Hall and the pair took alternate solos in a Gershwin medley, the only true duet being a version of "Strike Up The Band". Jolson's last appearance on Philco Radio Time was on 3rd December and although Bing guested on Kraft, once more, in January 1948, Al was not to "come out to play" with him again for another two years. The reason? A contentious theory is expounded in Michael Freedland's biography of Jolson, "...the singers could not agree terms. One report said that Bing and Al were at least $ 1,000 apart on what Jolson's appearance fee should be. Another stressed a more likely reason for the row, 'Bing did not enjoy the publicity over the fact that his ratings went up on the show whenever Al was the guest". If, as I do, you regard this as so much twaddle, when perhaps it was easier to identify, "Bing", than the sponsors or the network or possibly, any other Crosby that might have been involved, you may find glimmerings of the truth in the next quote:

"It cost CBS's Bill Paley a lot of out-of-the-network-pocket coin to tie up Al Jolson to a three year Columbia exclusive as guest star, No. 1, in circulating the AM and TV air waves but the pay-off was already evident in Jolie's first time out, last Wednesday (30th), guesting on Bing Crosby's Chesterfield stanza (He's already committed to a minimum of five with the Groaner). The team-up was a throwback to ad-lib radio comedy, at its best, paralleling those of Bob Hope-Crosby 'dream sequences' when scripts are tossed out of the studio window as they slug it out on the banter front. Despite the prevailing tendency of the comics to go 'tradey', Jolie and the Bingle parlayed the intra-trade stuff into nearly a half hour of delightful listening, punctuated by some solo and duo vocalising that was strictly off the $6.60 attraction shelf. Jolie's, "Own Backyard ' and Bing's, "Lucky Old Sun", with a choral background, were particular gems. The frequent by-play on Paley and Columbia, video's inroads on radio, (including the Jolie revelation that he'll be guesting on some CBS-TV stanzas) with even some borderline suggestions as to Jolson's relations with Columbia Pictures ("The Jolson Story"/"Jolson Sings Again") was Tiffany slanted comedy..... ("Variety" 7th December 1949)

The kind reviews were maintained for four more outings for Chesterfield which produced a further sixteen duets until, with the untimely death of Al Jolson on the 23rd October 1950, there were just a few sad lines to be written about the show that never happened:

On the show to have been taped with Bing Crosby tonight, (Tuesday 24th), Al Jolson was to have been paid high tribute for his recent Korean trip. Jolson would have dueted with Crosby in a medley of Jolson hits, with Jolie also to have soloed, 'Japanese Sandman'. Tonight's taping was cancelled by Crosby and will be done Friday or Saturday instead. Writer and co-producer said a tribute will be paid to Jolson and it is likely that the musical portion will comprise songs identified with the Mammy singer." ("Variety" 25th October 1950)

In contrast, here are some quotes from the Press, dated six weeks before Al recorded his first show with Bing:

"Bing Crosby's troubles, apparently are just beginning. That initial 24 rating on his Philco transcribed show is now down to 12.2....word has gone out to The Groaner from his Philco sponsors to get busy and do something in a hurry....Everett Crosby admitted that the platter show is due for some drastic revamping....the rating nose-dive plus the unfavourable reaction to Crosby's last few shows have contributed to putting a quietus on the 'live to transcription' flurry of trade excitement that followed in the wake of Crosby's premiere and Philco's super promotion job. In view of the original contract stipulation which calls for Crosby to go 'live' in the event that his ratings slips under 12 on four consecutive broadcasts, some of the boys are wagering that The Groaner segues back to live programmes...."

No one would be crass enough to claim that Jolson's presence revived an ailing radio series as there were plenty of good Philco shows without him but at least, it provided a diversion from the critics' unreasonable prejudices and persistent sniping at pre-recorded broadcasts (If they hadn't been told, would they have been aware?). "Variety" conspired to assist in a more overt form of isolation by their policy of reviewing "Transcribed Programmes" separately from those transmitted "live" and the truth probably lies in the fact that "The Trade" was still unable to come to terms with a practice that would soon become generally accepted as the norm for both radio and television.

That's all for now, America. Nurse says that I can go back to crayoning in my colouring book.

Lionel Pairpoint

ONCE IN A WHILE

Arthur Tracy died last October at the age of 97. One of the great names of the early radio years when he was known as 'The Street Singer', he was born Abraham Tratserofski on June 25, 1900 in the Ukraine. In 1906 his family emigrated to the USA and made a home in Philadelphia. Young Abraham moved into show business as 'Arthur Tracy' and his strong powerful voice gave him a wide repertoire ranging from dramatic ballads to operettas. He was featured in shows such as 'Blossom Time' and 'The Student Prince' and in the late 1920s he worked with various dance bands. In vaudeville, he would appear at the side of the stage, standing under a street lamp and in 1931 he adopted the stage name of 'The Street Singer (of the radio)'. He was one of the top stars in those early radio days and he was featured singing 'Here Lies Love' in the film 'The Big Broadcast' (1932) which as we all know gave Bing his first starring role in a major film. Hits such as 'Marta (Rambling Rose of the Wildwood)' and 'Kiss Me Goodnight' came in 1932 and in 1934 Arthur enjoyed another hit with 'Play to Me Gypsy'.

In 1935, Tracy came to the UK and starred at the London Palladium. He went on to enjoy phenomenal success in Britain and made three films here; 'Limelight' (1935) with Anna Neagle, 'The Street Singer' (1937) with Margaret Lockwood, 'Command Performance' (1937) with Lilli Palmer and 'Follow Your Star' (1938) with Belle Chrystall. At the beginning of the Second World War, Tracy returned to the USA. He came back to the UK in 1948 on tour but as rock 'n' roll came in, he retired from the showbiz scene. In 1967, Arthur Tracy came back to the UK on holiday and whilst he was here, he was persuaded to appear on the Eamonn Andrews TV show. Arising from this, he agreed to appear in a week's variety show at the Birmingham Hippodrome. Your Editor was a young man at the time and my grandmother had always told me about her idol of the thirties, Arthur Tracy. I arranged to take her to the opening night and what a splendidly nostalgic evening it was. Arthur Tracy charmed us all and sang magnificently in a performance that my grandmother recalled frequently for the rest of her life and which I shall never forget.

In 1976, the paths of Bing and Arthur crossed again. On December 3, Bing appeared on Joe Franklin's TV Show in New York and during the programme, Arthur Tracy was introduced from the audience leading Bing to sing a few words of 'Marta'. Arthur spent his final years in New York. He was married and divorced three times.

Sonny Bono was killed in a skiing accident in California in January. He was 62. Sonny was a successful songwriter and producer when he met the 16-year-old Cher. They were soon touring together and in 1965 they had a number one hit with 'I Got You Babe'. Other hits followed but soon, as the Financial Times obituary stated "their blend of hippy respectability faded from fashion. A soulful husband gazing at his beautiful wife while singing of eternal love was hardly likely to survive the advent of progressive rock." The duo enjoyed a second career in the early 1970s in a television sitcom but the couple divorced in 1975. Cher went on to great success whilst Sonny faded from view for while. In 1988, Sonny was elected mayor of Palm Springs and he then went on to become a Californian Congressman to the House of Representatives in Washington. The connection with Bing? Look at the' diary' for January 1, 1966. Yes, Sonny and Cher guested on the Hollywood Palace hosted by Bing on that day. Bing sang 'Have You Made Your Resolutions' with the couple.

Louise Campbell - passed away last November at the age of 86. She played Bing's wife in 'The Star Maker' (1939) and also appeared in several other Paramount films between 1937 and 1947.

James Algar - Oscar winning Director from the Walt Disney studios died in February. He directed nine true life adventure productions for Disney which won Academy Awards and his connection with Bing comes from him having directed part of 'The Adventures of Ichabod and Mr. Toad' which featured Bing's narration of the Ichabod segment.

Robert Lewis, who directed Bing in the 1956 version of 'Anything Goes' has also passed away since our last edition.

Malcolm Macfarlane

Bert Bishop's BING ON THE BOX

We mentioned in our last edition that a plethora of tributes to Bing on the twentieth anniversary of his death had come in too late for inclusion but because of the importance of these, Bert now records them in a marathon article for posterity together with other news of Bing on TV and radio.

How frustrating for avid scanners of the TV schedules that November, in the United Kingdom, turned out to be totally Bing-less in so far as television was concerned. We have all been very disappointed at the total disregard of the 20th. anniversary of his demise on that medium, and although the Yuletide season featured one or two Christmassy films it has been left to the wireless to cover the special anniversary, and the holiday period, with quite a deluge of both noteworthy and creditable Crosbyana.

But, for viewers in the post-Christmas period, hooray for good old Sky Movies Gold! The last day of the fill-dyke month saw us off on an enjoyable series of Roads, sufficient to satisfy even the most disgruntled and deprived Crosbyphile. Particularly so in my own case as I have successfully introduced a young, work colleague to the comedic and musical delights of Pawky & Jest, enough that he is now keenly collecting every 'stop-over' of the footloose adventurers on video tape. Providing you had satellite receiving equipment you would have been able to enjoy a four film Road-fest from 11a.m. through until 5.30 p.m.! Surely, at least in the United Kingdom, this must constitute a 'first' of televised Crosby movies! And almost amazingly, they managed to screen them in date sequence. Well done Sky!

DECEMBER

THE GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH	BBC2	2nd.
ROBIN AND THE 7 HOODS	Sky Screen 1	
10th. 16th.		
THAT'S ENTERTAINMENT 2	BBC1	23rd.
WHITE CHRISTMAS	BBC2	25th.

JANUARY

ROBIN AND THE 7 HOODS	Sky Screen 1
2nd. 12th. (2 plays) 20th. 30th.	

"You've either got or you haven't got style"

THAT'S ENTERTAINMENT	TNT	4th.
THAT'S ENTERTAINMENT 2	TNT	11th

FEBRUARY

HIGH SOCIETY		TNT
6th. 12th. 22nd. 23rd.		
ROAD TO SINGAPORE	Sky Movies Gold	28th.
ROAD TO ZANZIBAR	Sky Movies Gold	28th.
ROAD TO UTOPIA	Sky Movies Gold	28th.
THE ROAD TO HONG KONG	Sky Movies Gold	28th.

But now, back to Guglielmo Marconi's great invention and what was being picked up on the airwaves during the month of October. Undoubtedly a very busy month for Ken Barnes as he toured, by telephone, any number of local radio stations promoting his United Artists 3-cd set in conjunction with the twentieth anniversary of Bing's death. Members who attended the Leeds Meeting will have a pretty good idea of how the interviews went; but for those who were not present let's take a broad look at the general pattern of the programmes on which he guested.

CATCH A RISING STAR

High in the firmament of listener participation Keith Skues' ten to midnight weekday broadcast covering Essex, Suffolk, Cambs., Norfolk and the Three Counties network Beds./Berks./Bucks, was, by population, the largest catchment area on which Ken was the special guest. On the 14th. October Ken Barnes regaled the listeners with a wealth of anecdotes and musical illustration typical of most of his telephone link-ups. Keith, disarmingly bland, but with unquestionable integrity, began his tribute programme with a greatly condensed but pretty accurate biography of Bing before going on to offer three copies of the 'Memories' CD in a write-in Crosby quiz. Ken was then introduced and in response to a whole series of sensible questions he related how he had first met Bing in 1974 through the good offices of Johnny Mercer. Ken was aware that Bing was interested in cutting another album and, influenced by Ken's track record, and cajoled by Mercer himself, and Leslie Gaylor - 'Two friends at court' - Bing eventually decided to go ahead with the project given the obvious provisos of contract and material. From an initial fifty possibles the first selections were made. Bing being keen to record standards that he'd neglected in his career.

Impressed with the power of Bing's voice Ken decided to record him further back from the microphone than was usual, thus allowing the full scope of his vocal talent to be heard. A considerable improvement on 'Sixties and 'Seventies tracks on which, I'm sure we all agree, Bing was well below his potential. But, as we now know, almost entirely for technical reasons. Despite the recording engineer's misgivings concerning sound 'leaking in' the twelve inches distancing proved to be one of the success stories of the entire, fruitful partnership. This, along with the fact that Bing refused to record inside a sound booth. "I might as well have stayed in California and sung to a track. I'm an old band singer - if they get loud I'll sing louder!"

Ken described how Bing was a mega-star who knew his value but always looked to be one of the fellas. "He did his damnedest to be a regular guy" ... when mixing with the musicians and production team. This was one of the reasons Ken decided to include the 'fly-on-the wall' soundbites in the United Artists 3-cd collection. Ken found Bing to have a colourful turn of phrase - "A drum roll you could throw a dog through", of his own drumming being a typical example. The fact that Bing was also multi-lingual, conversing fluently with Trini Lopez in the latter's own language, was another facet of Bing's vocal abilities that Ken was keen to impart.

After a break in the interview during which Keith gave a nice review of Malcolm's 'Diary Of A Lifetime', and played three Crosby songs as dedications, Ken again came back on board and related how Bing had become very misty-eyed at the conclusion of the one-take "Children" track. All agreed that it couldn't be bettered - with Bing keeping turned away from everyone to conceal his emotion. That philosophical recording being played on the programme to illustrate its sentimental appeal; followed by the apposite "A Little Love And Understanding".

The lyrics and story behind two more songs were expanded upon when Ken explained to Keith how he had also been working in London with Fred Astaire and, allowing himself to be a little economical with the truth, eventually brought about the happy fusion of the two septuagenarians who between them had around 120 years of show business experience. The album was, of course, 'Top Billing'; the title tune of which, written by Ken and Pete Moore, was inspired by, and created from, arguments put forward by the artistes' agents as to who should take precedence on the album cover. This ad-lib packed, one-take performance was given air-time, followed by "That's What Life Is All About". Bing's contribution to the lyric again described by Ken as on John Richards' late summer 1997 programme and referred to in the last issue of this magazine.

After thanking Ken Barnes for his entertaining and informative contribution to the programme Keith played a further four Bing tracks before pulling the plug on the programme for the night. Before the final track led into the wee small hours Keith was to say:
"No singer of American popular songs was ever as loved and admired as Bing Crosby. From his early performances in vaudeville in the late 1920s until his last appearance in 1977 Bing Crosby captivated his world-wide audience with an irresistible vocal style and personality. His artistry graced the world's consciousness for over sixty years. His music will live on for ever."

LOWE - AND BEHOLD

Radio Bristol also benefited by Ken's 'phone-in contribution. Presenter David Lowe playing the Gordon Rose versions of "As Time Goes By" and "Nevertheless; as well as Bing's very last song, "Once In A While". Asking Ken to pinpoint Bing's greatest influence on the art of singing popular music he unhesitatingly replied; "Phrasing. Bing was the first white singer to incorporate jazz ..." He also related how surprised Pete Moore was on hearing Bing in the studio for the first time. Previously thinking of him as little more than just one half of the Crosby-Hope duo and never realising just how good a singer he was. There was the story of Bing repeatedly singing a wrong note, and on having the correct one played back to him replied "That's the note? Gee, I'd need a guide dog to find that note!" David Lowe also featured "Tenderly", "Change Partners", "Children", the early "Love Thy Neighbour", "Whiffenpoof Song" and David's all-time favourite Bing track, "The Kiss In Your Eyes" - the screen sequence of which must rate as one of Bing's greatest seductions!.

DANTON'S INFORMAL

Still on tour in the West Country Ken Barnes took in Chris Robinson's BBC Radio South & West and Graham Danton's 'Music For You'. Graham began his tribute by telling listeners of some of Bing's achievements, such as being the number one box office star for five consecutive years, and having over 300 chart hits. Much of Ken's contribution was as previously described, but other engaging by-lines emerged such as the description of Dean Martin being 'The drinking man's Crosby'. There was also the anecdote of Fred Astaire meeting up with Gary Crosby in a supermarket. Fred, having been upset by Gary's condemnation of his father in his book 'Going My Own Way', told Gary "You shouldn't have written that book about your Dad. It may have been true from your angle, but the other side deserves to be told and Bing isn't around to tell it. During his lifetime he didn't do anything to put you down."

During a recording session, which included "Razzle Dazzle", Joanie Baxter of the vocal group on that track 'phoned her mother who was unwell. Hearing Miss Baxter make the call Bing took the 'phone from her and spoke awhile to her Mum. "Your daughter's a great singer", said Bing, "and I'm pleased to be working with her." At the end of the session all three girls in the group kissed him which, not surprisingly, Bing found quite touching. Tracks played were the popular ones from the United Artists collection and Ken concluded by saying that he couldn't believe that he'd done so much work with Bing and that it had been twenty years since his passing. Graham continued his tribute by first offering a year's free membership to the ICC to any listener who could say in what town Bing was born. This prize, by way of a cheque made out to the ICC, was donated by Maggie Ryan. The quiz wasn't too difficult as the answer came in a ten stanza poem entitled 'Bing', lovingly written for the sad anniversary by Devonian David Prowse and printed elsewhere in this magazine.

CHRIS FAMILY SHOW ROBINSON

From the same source a similar cheque as a quiz prize was also made available on 'The Sunday Late Show' hosted by Chris Robinson. Again some astute and relevant questions made for interesting listening, with Chris and Ken chatting as though this was just a private, one-to-one conversation. Most of what has been reported here in other interviews was repeated, but even so it came over quite fresh and

with further insights as to the man himself. "Bing was a natural performer; easy going and just how you see him on the screen." Ken has made the summing up comment several times in the past "What you see is what you get." Having discussed the five LPs he was involved with, at what by today's standards seems a modest cost of £70,000 including expenses, he was happy to state that there was no red ink - all paid and in profit.

Ken went on to say how Tony Bennett had said of Bing. "He invented the suburbs." In other words Crosby took the world of jazz related recordings to people who wouldn't otherwise have listened to it; and Ken also explained how he thought it appropriate to have David Bowie on the last Christmas Special. Which was an inspired decision in view of the terrific exposure Bing has had to a new generation through the commercial release of their "Little Drummer Boy" duet.

Chris is noted for his Mystery Year quiz, the clues being in the recordings themselves. He also features a lot of very vintage material, so it was no surprise to hear such Crosby items as "Three Little Words", the Gus Arnheim backed "I Surrender Dear" and the radio duet with the Mills Brothers of "Lazy River - Paper Doll". Of the United Artists material Fred Astaire joined Bing with "Pick Yourself Up" and "Top Billing", with almost inevitably "Children" - as it illustrates the spontaneous emotion described in the now famous anecdote - and the personalised philosophy of "That's What Life Is All About". Added to which was "Sam's Song" and the Victor Young accompanied "Around The World". A BBC South & West Special by Chris Robinson that did Bing proud. Especially as the following weekend Chris was able to state what a positive response he had had to the programme and went on to play six more Crosby songs from right across the board.

ANNE - IVERSARY SPECIAL;

Heading north via thrumming telephone wires Ken Barnes stopped off in Anne Hopper country - Cumbria in fact - to participate in her Sunday afternoon 'Music Box' programme of the 12th. October, sub-titled 'A Tribute To The Late Bing Crosby'. Two appropriate tracks opened the show; "The Pleasure Of Your Company", and "The Only Way To Go" which Anne felt was a suitable, musical prefix to her comments that Bing, at the age of 74 years, died doing what he liked best - enjoying himself on a golf course. And although there has been much less hysteria than has been evident for Elvis Presley, Crosby is still much grieved for and remembered. There followed a brief history of his career before imparting the information that between 1890 and 1954 Bing's involvement in his particular segment of those sixty-four years had made him the best selling ever recording artiste.

A suitable point in the proceedings to introduce Ken Barnes who, she explained, knew him well professionally. During their conversation, in which Ken covered most of which has been reported here on other interviews, Anne said that she believed Crosby to be very approachable, to which Ken replied that Bing liked people, but not necessarily show-biz folk. He told with some amusement how Bing had regaled him with a complete history of the manufacture of Tequila! Ken was to say how two men - Bing and Louis Armstrong - were the most significant in creating the whole culture of popular music; and how with the onset of microphone recording Bing exploited it to such great advantage; changing from a tenor to a baritone singer in the process. Anne was to make a couple of rather surprising comments, which brought me up with a start. Firstly, in reference to his popularity: In terms of musicianship his voice in the 'Thirties and early 'Forties didn't seem to be particularly remarkable. "What then made him so popular?", followed by: "(Was his popularity) ... before Sinatra's would you say?" Pardon! Did I hear right? Would you care to think about that Anne - and re-phrase it? However, Ken came back to the first comment with; "Some people preferred him then!", and to the second, amazing remark a pointed response which left her in no doubt who came first and was the number one guy!

The story of how Bing was responsible for the introduction of audio and video tape, by recognising its potential and sponsoring its development, was another of the many anecdotes that Ken repeated here as in other programme appearances, along with the reasons for inclusion of the earlier, two recordings with Bob Hope. All of which must have boosted not only the sales of his lovingly produced and greatly appreciated project but also went a long way in keeping Bing's name and image very much to the fore of public awareness. Anne closed the programme with the much more enlightened statement: "(in the history of music) ... one comes along to change the music scene for ever. Such a one was Bing Crosby."

FRANK TALKING

Good though all of Ken's 'phone-link interviews were my 'N.T.B.O.B.' award this time around goes to Frank Wappat, broadcasting from BBC Newcastle-upon-Tyne, for his handling and presentation of Ken Barnes, and for coaxing and encouraging just that bit extra from our Producer extraordinaire. Frank, being the original 'Thirties Club' founder, began his 20th. October broadcast with a classic 'Thirties track, as one might have anticipated: namely, the 'Mississippi' ballad "Down By The River" immediately prior to introducing Ken, of whom he asked to tell of his career before meeting up with Bing. Ken explained that he had produced a successful Roy Castle LP in 1966 and after working for Decca went freelance - including Polydor. The chain of events leading up to the Crosby coup being a couple of albums of Johnny Mercer for Pye Records - Mercer being an all-time favourite of his. Meeting up with Bing's manager and discovering that Bing, even with one lung out of action since his operation, could still sing and was, in fact, desirous of making another album, Ken decided on the spot that as an "an enterprising young record producer" he would put in his bid. Cue for the next record and the first of a dozen United Artists tracks, "The Pleasure Of Your Company".

Some repartee followed when Frank asked; "Are you a musician?"
"I used to play drums", responded Ken, with just a hint of levity. Of drummers Frank laughingly replied; "Are they

musicians?"
"It's a safe area. Wherever you hit, you hit the right note", suggested Ken; and went on to tell of Bing's similar beginnings and his now famous drum roll gag. In response to Frank's enquiry as to Bing's status with the Pete Moore orchestra, Ken related how the musicians - notoriously blasé to the point of disinterest - bought up all of Bing's albums from the retail part of the studio premises to get them signed by Mr. Crosby. When Bing was around the studio they enjoyed being there: "He sprinkled stardust wherever he went."

Of the recording "I Love To Dance Like They Used To Dance" - next to be played - Bing had asked for the arrangement to be in the key of E Flat; but Ken thought it didn't suit Bing's best register and asked Pete Moore to set it up in D Flat. "Don't you think he'll notice?", queried Pete with some concern; but went ahead anyway. In the event Bing didn't notice and sang it very well. As there are some testing high notes in that melody Ken made the right decision one feels. "Great Day" quickly followed, Ken explaining to Frank's suggestion of a jazz-rock concept there that "Bing had strong jazz roots and as a vocalist stood out like a beacon in the Whiteman era." While recognising that "Frank Sinatra was probably the greatest interpreter and phraser of ballads, Crosby was streets ahead when it came to jazz. Bing was never a duck out of water - could sing anything, and with anybody. Can you think of any other singer who could have encompassed such a range that went from Bix to Bowie?" And of the next featured song, "How Are Things In Glocca Morra?", Ken was to say that despite Bing's seventy-two years Sinatra in his heyday couldn't have sung it better. Four further songs from what Frank has dubbed "The Rolls Royce of compact discs" illustrated various aspects of discussion on Bing's private life: "Cabaret", "We've Only Just Begun", "Top Billing" and "When A Child Is Born". Of the latter Ken explained that Bing just missed out on a chart topper by an important business appointment in America delaying his completion of the track. Johnny Mathis pipping him to the post by a few weeks.

Frank had been saddened by a few books and articles that had set out to destroy Bing's easy-going guy image and suggested that Crosby had been more maligned in this way than anybody else. Ken was inclined to agree, and set matters to rights by telling the listening public that both he and Pete Moore had come to the conclusion "That if all (in the industry) could be as Bing had been wouldn't life be wonderful!" Almost inevitably "That's What Life Is All About" became the closer for Ken's contribution to the programme; with Frank signing off to the strains of the 1931 version of "Where The Blue Of The Night". Nearly ninety minutes of informative, in-depth and very listenable Crosbyana, the like of which can only enhance listener enjoyment. With Ken Barnstorming across the country in this form what more could we ask for?

LOVING TRIBUTE

Meanwhile, in the Emerald Isle, Walter Love's programme 'Love Forty' - which goes out under the auspices of Ulster Radio - was broadcasting a 'Tribute To Bing' Special featuring Crosby experts and ICC members George O'Reilly, Roy Irvine and Jim Lemon. Roy's choice, "I've Got A Pocketful Of Dreams" got the programme off to a good start - though a pocketful of memories would have been particularly appropriate title for the affectionate and nostalgic reminiscences. The two latter members, when asked what it was that drew them into the Crosby camp, replied that they were comfortable with his voice and the great drama Bing could produce, as illustrated in "Swanee River". The music and times were just great and Bing so outstanding. That was in the days when Crosby's movies came out with great regularity and you could get into the Lyric cinema, Bridge Street for just threepence, and Shearer's record store in old Smithfield used to have all the 78s laid out in a vertical line so that potential customers might read the labels. Or later, in Marcus's, where the assistant, Marie, a dark haired colleen, was most efficient in producing the Crosby releases as soon as they became available, telling the two collectors way back in those post-war years that Bing was still the most popular by request. A typical track being "You Sang My Love Song To Somebody Else".

"Gone Fishin'", the Bing and Satchmo radio broadcast, was played to illustrate the character and informality of the weekly shows and proved to be the introductory track to George O'Reilly's appearance on the programme. George was very informative concerning facts and figures relating to the heady days of Bing in his radio years. Asked how important were these shows he explained that they were massive for Bing. Some thirty million people used to tune in to his show every week. During those decades there were three time zones in America and Bing quickly realised the time saving potential of recording the first and relaying further broadcasts as appropriate. At first the programmes went down on glass discs, but problems arose with these; which prompted Bing to pursue the idea of magnetic tape and sponsor its development. For years Bing was voted the number one M.C. in regular polls.

The special relationship between Crosby and Hope was touched upon and illustrated, musically, by the air-shot of "If I Knew You Were Coming I'd Have Baked a Cake"; and still on the theme of special relationships Walter Love questioned George about his with Bing. Even before meeting up with Bing, and because of their two-way correspondence, Bing had written to Nat King Cole as follows: "I believe you're going to Dublin; when you're there would you ever visit George O'Reilly's Records." Louis Armstrong, among others, was to follow, saying to George; "How do you know Bing Crosby? Because I wouldn't do this for anyone else!"

After first meeting Bing in England in 1953 George arranged for Bing to come to Ireland in 1961 and laid on a typical Crosby type weekend of golf, horse racing and meeting Irish artistes. Bing was very taken with it all and was very gratified by the reception he received - like visiting royalty - prompting him to return whenever possible, and most especially to keep Paddy Prendergast on his toes with training a few winners! Bing had said to George several times that part of his philosophy in life was to learn something new every day, which was probably what made him very good at being an M.C. and

commentator - as he was with his golf, ball-game and field sports programmes. "Bing excelled at everything he did." remarked George. To illustrate Bing's desire to bring artistes to his show not normally associated with 'popular music', the November 1948 Philco Radio Time air-shot of his duet with Dorothy Kirsten, "These Foolish Things" was featured.

The thorny question of which decade of Bing is best was addressed by the original guests, with the three main eras of 1931-1933; 1938-1940 and 1950-1952 being the suggested sub-divisions of his overall career. June 1933, especially the 9th., being quoted as pure gold - a selection with which I would heartily concur; though with "Trade Winds" being played to point up the quality of the middle era. Before introducing the last of the choices, "Goodbye, Little Darlin', Goodbye", Walter came up with the famous Crosby quote, as relayed by Ed Murrow, who had asked Bing: "Do people recognise you in the street?" "Oh, sure." replied Bing. "And if they don't well then I hum a little!'

A SHROPSHIRE LAD

On the 11th. October BBC Radio Shropshire in the persons of hosts Michael Adams and Chris Savery presented a special Bing biography programme in the their 'Record Collectors' series. ICC member Ken Crossland was their knowledgeable guest who by the musical introduction of "A Little Love And Understanding" promoted the United Artists 3-cd set and went on to inform listeners local to Salop of Bing's musical achievements: "(Bing) ... recorded every year of his professional life and in 1970, having sold 400 million records the companies stopped counting!" Ken explained that Crosby was the first to introduce the concept of a solo singer; previously a band member would have got up and sung, regardless of ability in that department.
To illustrate the natural quality in the young Crosby voice the recording of "Once In A Blue Moon" was played. "That was the voice of America in the 'Thirties.", said Ken - describing Bing as easy going, happy-go-lucky and everybody's friend. And of his friendship with Louis Armstrong, Ken was to say how much Satchmo had influenced Bing's vocal style, especially in those early years of his career. Coming forward in time their 'duet' of "I Love You Samantha" was featured with Ken informing listeners that Satchmo's last professional appearance was with Bing on the Frost Over America TV show in February 1971, featuring one final performance of "Blueberry Hill" together. Ken related how he himself had spent a half-hour with Bing, backstage, on the last Saturday of Bing's life, and quoted the Old Groaner's own epitaph: 'He was an average guy who could carry a tune.' It was only fitting that the programme should close with Bing's philosophical statement; "That's What Life Is All About".

DOWN IN THE VALLEY

For those residing in the land of Bing's birth, WRD FM was the station to be tuned into on the 10th. October when a regular programme entitled 'Sunshine Music Memories' devoted its entire three hours to the memory of Bing Crosby. For the loan of the cassettes covering this extremely worthwhile programme I'm indebted to Ken Merry of Bessacarr, Doncaster, from whom copies of this broadcast can be made available. 'Radio in the Delaware Valley' is the broad title of the 89.3 location on the dial, on this occasion featuring the knowledgeable talents of Anthony de Florio lll, Bill Pacone and Gary Stevens - who, amazingly, was present as a very young man at Bing's very first 11 p.m Wednesday 2nd. September 1931 radio broadcast of "Just One More Chance" and "I'm Through With Love". The reason for Bing's postponement in going out on air, he affirmed, being more a case of 'liquid laryngitis' rather than the ordinary kind! Later in the programme, Gary related further anecdotes never before made public, including outstanding favours Bing had performed for him, including offering to appear on a charity programme Gary was doing, after accidentally meeting up with each other. Despite what was clearly a very limited and casual acquaintance in the first place Bing had remembered Gary well enough to be interested in what he was doing and wanted to help. On a later occasion, when Gary was working for the Sister Kenny Foundation for the treatment of infantile paralysis, he was by his acquaintance with Bing able to obtain the services of 'The biggest name in show business', pointing out that not only was there no fee involved but that Bing also returned the expenses cheque he had been presented with. Needless to say the Foundation was very impressed by Gary's coup! He stressed how popular Bing was in the studio, with those present clapping in enthusiastic response at the recordings of "Please" and "Love In Bloom". In all twenty-six musical items were played on this marathon broadcast one of which was a twelve-song medley by Bing from Joe Franklin's 3rd. December 1976 TV show.

From the opening introduction of the BBC announcement of Bing's death to the closing item of J. J. Barrie's poignant ballad, "So Long Bing", the broadcast progressed biographically both musically and informally as the hosts chatted and reminisced in meritorious detail about each recording. Of particular interest was Bing's meeting up with Arthur Tracy, 'The Street Singer' (who, incidentally, couldn't play the piano accordion) on the same television show; and Bob de Flores' story of how he met up with the most famous show-biz golfer after salvaging the film short 'Swing With Bing' which had shots of the principle participant's dad and brothers in it. Bing being keen to own a copy, of course. The three hours - less station breaks - was packed with interest and music, which included the, superior, 1942 "White Christmas"; the unissued fluffed take of "Put It There Pal"; President Roosevelt's favourite 1933 version of "Home On the Range"; Rhythm Boys' recordings; singalongs, and what was described as an early Rap recording, "There's Nothing That I Haven't Sung About".

One can only hope that this exceptional broadcast was heard and appreciated by a large percentage of the good folk of Delaware Valley, who tune in to that particular frequency, and that they reflect more appreciatively on the incredible influence of their own countryman's contribution to the world of popular music and entertainment generally.

BIG BAND TO BROADWAY

Hosted by Rich Michaels, this Wisconsin based wireless station broadcasts on AM 1470 WBKV with music covered by the title used to headline both his programme and this report. On the twelfth October contributing editor to the American Club Crosby magazine 'BINGANG', Greg Van Beek, guested on a special edition of the programme to remember the 1977 tragedy twenty years on. Bearing in mind that Greg was just five years old when Bing rung down the final curtain it is gratifying to know that he numbers among quite a coterie of keen and knowledgeable Crosby collectors who will be carrying the Bing banner many years in to the future. Indeed, in this connection Greg mentioned a ten year old member!

This Sunday morning two-and-a-half hour bonanza was jam-packed with around forty songs, most of which came from radio or television, the commentary being restricted to a few anecdotes and information relating to the recordings, including the many vocal accompanists. Interestingly, the oldest track featured was "Too-Ra-Loo-Ra-Loo-Ral"; and if they were all Greg's choice it would seem that he has yet to 'discover' the sheer vocal artistry of Bing's previous decade. Certainly, the programme title would suggest that very many earlier recordings would have been eligible. It was nice to hear the show closing with three songs from the BBC album 'The Final Chapter', and although "White Christmas", lifted from the last TV Special, preceded a few bars reprise of "Where The Blue Of the Night", "Once In A While" proved an apt and poignant closer on the ballad scene.
The resident, local Bing historian from West Bend, Wisconsin was again the guest on Rich Michael's Christmas Special of twenty-first of December 1997, an all-Bing-fest much along the lines of the previous programme inasmuch as the dialogue was not overly intrusive, and a lot of the material was taken from TV. With a half-dozen tracks from the 'A Time To Be Jolly' album sprinkled among a goodly selection of seasonal Crosby. "You can't have Christmas without him.", opined Greg.

MORE WITH STAN

My greatest benefactor in the Eastern Counties, for recorded programmes, featured prominently in the 20th. Anniversary Tribute stakes when he himself he guested on Jim More's 'Bing's World', which went out on BBC Radio Cambridgeshire on the 12th. October. American born Jim opened the show with a rarely heard on radio track - "Where The Turf Meets The Surf" - which he explained was "As I used to hear him (Bing) on Los Angeles radio every August for ages. Today we're observing the anniversary of his death and celebrating his life.", and welcoming Stan White he asked our Member from the middle shires how he came to choose the records. Not easy - as Stan observed! And went on to catalogue by quantity Bing's vast output. Harking back to Crosby's childhood and developing years the influence of such as John McCormack and Al Jolson, first through his father, and later by personal preference, were stressed. The biographical pattern followed with reference to Bing drumming in The Musicaladers, which would have been a typical 'Twenties ragtime ensemble. To illustrate this musically, Hoagy Carmichael's College band of 1928 was featured with their jazzy "Walking The Dog" number.

However, the first of Stan's choices, "If I Had A Talking Picture Of You", was an apt introduction to discussion of his early film career. This, by progression, led Jim to ask was Bing really a crooner, and what is a crooner anyway? Stan had clearly done his homework on this one, for he had traced the origins of the word back to the 15th. century pointing out that even Robert Burns had used the word in his literary works. 'A low moaning or groaning sound.' was a near medieval definition, which prompted Stan to suggest, with some levity, that it might well be why Bing was called 'The Old Groaner'! A perfect example of this being "Brother Can You Spare A Dime?" Films again; and the track by Anne Lenner with Carroll Gibbons of "The Moon Got in My Eyes" was the second departure, of several, from an 'all Crosby' recordings programme; though each track played was relevant to the developing storyline. From Kraft Music Hall, and back to Bing again, we heard "Are You Having Any Fun", closely followed by "I've Got A Pocketful Of Dreams", and a little bit of Jean Sablon crooning "These Foolish Things" in his native tongue - complete with a few ba-boo-boos'! Dick Todd - now universally known as the Canadian Crosby - was also given air-time, with "I Can't Get Started". In both instances to illustrate that every country had it's 'Crosby'.

To counteract the gloom and doom of the war years the uplifting songs and films kept the country going and, said Stan, "Everyone felt there was a certain sort of comfort in Bing Crosby. As long as Bing was around everything would turn out fine." Bing's classic live broadcast of the "Iowa" fluff was featured to show that even the mighty can get it wrong sometimes. After which Stan slipped in one of his favourites, I do believe, "Sioux City Sue". A nice story attached to the next song enhanced the script when Stan told of George O'Reilly driving Bing all the way across Ireland just so that he could see the sun go down on "Galway Bay" - and of the terrific reception Bing received from the locals. Every crofter, cottager, man, woman and child owning, or familiar with, 'that record' no doubt!

To demonstrate the mid-fifties 'watershed' in the Crosby voice Stan played "The Longest Walk" which he considered was the last opportunity to hear what most had come to know and recognise as the true, Crosby sound. There followed the story of Bing's re-emergence under the auspices of Ken Barnes, and the ICC involvement with the production of the 'Memories' CD - in particular the use and transportation of Leslie Gaylor's precious 78s for this purpose. From that album the song "Helpless" more or less closed a nicely balanced programme; but not before Jim More invoked one of his own memories again, from TV this time, when he said: "I can still see him puffing his cheeks out and saying 'Minute Maid Orange Juice - there's no-o doubt about it!'"

CIRCLE OF FRIENDS

ICC Members Barry Whittingham and Ken Heason made a brief guest appearance on Radio Nottingham for the

occasion; explaining the whys and wherefores of their affiliation to the world of Crosbyana, promoting both Bing and the Circle with a few factual answers to some not too serious questions from Geoff Owen. Following some references to the 'Memories' compact disc their host played "Walk Me by The River". A track that Barry suggested had almost certainly never been heard by the station's listeners ever before.

GOING SOLO

Barnsey at the Beeb is used to, and very competent at, unsupported programme presentation; and while Paul would have almost certainly welcomed his namesake Ken, I guess the latter couldn't appear on every local radio station to promote the U. A. release and remember Bing's passing. Never one to 'celebrate' the anniversary of a death P. B. preferred to just observe the occasion, continuing to celebrate Bing's life and work in every programme; paying particular attention, with each passing month, to the ICC calendar sheet music illustrations by describing the cover and playing the appropriate item. All I can say is that he is going to have a few problems with 1998! The music of Sam Coslow and Arthur Johnston for the month of October introduced virtually the entire score of the film 'Too Much Harmony' - Barnsey playing all four of the Jimmy Grier accompanied Crosby releases from that peak year of 1933. Of the 'undeniable hit', "Thanks", Paul remarked, after the last notes had faded (he never, ever talks over the music): "What a wonderful lilt that had. It was such an eminently danceable number. Did I hear, or was it my imagination, the whole region joining in?"
Being one of many recipients of 'Diary Of A Lifetime', Paul is now able to dip into its amazing pages for all those extra little snippets of information that he dearly loves to impart. All of which go to make for greater interest for the listener of course. He found the book a splendidly invaluable work of reference. And linking Malcolm's labour of love with the ICC, Paul also promoted the 'Memories' CD, offering a copy as a prize for correctly guessing Bing's given name. 'My kind of Connee Boswell' - that doyenne of all swinging sisters - was next to be featured when she and Cros bouncingly advanced the joys of greeting the new dawn with "Start The Day Right". Okay, yeah, it's a great track alright. I love it - but just don't play it to me at five-thirty on a Monday morning!

Having advised listeners that there would not be a Bing special to mark the event. Come the night, Paul 'Squeaky Chair' Barnes could not resist either the temptation, or just swimming with the tide of tributes, to mark the twentieth anniversary of The Boss's death. "It was a very, very good way to go. He could not have found a better way to shrug off the mortal coil.", he observed; introducing a handful of songs "all of which have given me tremendous pleasure to listen to." So that 'back to back' we heard "Sweet Potato Piper", "Living One Day At A Time", "A Gal In Calico", "Moonburn" and "Straight Down The Middle".

Moving beyond the October bonanza a listener wrote in for "Brother, Can You Spare A Dime", 'The most politically important song of the Twentieth Century' - from the musical 'Americana'; and further requests for Cros included the wonderfully evocative "Hello Mom", "Pennies From Heaven" - lifted from the 12" shellac - and "After Sundown". That last number was asked for by an ex-navy type who heard it over a dry dock's external loud-speaker system late one night while holed up in Gib in '42. "(Echoing 'round the shipyard) ... It sounded marvellous; but I've never heard it since". I'm reminded of a comment often made by good friend Geoff Block who remains puzzled as to why all these song-struck Crosby admirers, from way back when, never made any effort in fifty years, or more, to go and buy a copy! It certainly makes one wonder. To mark the loss of James Stewart, Paul played, again by request, the sauna sequence from the Chesterfield Show of 1952 - and continued with a near streak of gleeful sadism that sent the sad little Bingophobes scurrying to their sorry shelters with a selection that included "A Gal In Calico", "Small Fry" and one of the only two recordings cut with the Sy Oliver outfit, "I Didn't Slip, I Wasn't Pushed, I Fell". Among the Crosby Christmas fare Barnsey played "Little Jack Frost Get Lost" - very predictably, as P. B. does go for the J. S. Trotter bop in a big way - "We Wish You the Merriest" - in the company of the Hoboken born baritone, "Marshmallow World", "You're All I Want for Christmas" and, from the wireless, Bing and Ella sky-blazing with the 'red-nosed one', hard on the heels of their gratifyingly different "White Christmas". Many more tracks than room to mention were featured by Barnsey at the Beeb, but to conclude, three final nuggets panned from the river bed riches of 'Gold For Grown-ups', for which I'd like to thank Paul, were my own birthday request of Bing and Connee, with an all-star backing, duetting their really rousing version of "That's A-Plenty" - from the 1952 Chesterfield Show - and, as an added bonus, "Yes Indeed!" and "The Waiter, The Porter And The Upstairs Maid".

SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT

Well, that was how Malcolm Macfarlane explained the reason behind his brainchild, 'Diary Of A Lifetime', to an enquiring John Richards when he appeared on John's 'Magical Memories' Radio Lincolnshire programme of the 17th. October last. John had begun the salute to Bing by playing the first of two Mishel Piastro tracks; "When My Sugar Walks Down The Street", and after introducing our Editor the book was described and promoted by the host as being the remarkable work that it is. The project taking two and a half years of spare time - and this, bear in mind readers, that in the world of things Bing, was on top of editing and producing eight issues of the magazine during that gestation period. As the Diary traces almost every aspect of Bing's life, and taking in to account one or two hatchet-type books that have been published since his death, John asked what Crosby was really like. "Saint or sinner?" Malcolm responded by saying that Bing was" A human being with the frailties that we all have. Basically a shy man, but having a public image of easy going charm that belied his complex character." At the end of the day it may be said that Crosby's character wasn't polarised by those two extremes, but just like the rest of us, a mortal man subject to the power or impotence of strengths and weaknesses. Only in his case blessed with a special talent in his chosen field. John Richards thanked Malcolm for

appearing on the programme and closed this part of his two hours of vintage music with "Marie", almost certainly lifting the two songs featured from 'Lillis, Love And A Little Covered Wagon'.

THE BEST OF THE REST

Even as I type, all the many friends of the Crosby scene are playing, listening to and recording some wonderful music from Bing's vast catalogue of material. Normally, most of this would have been reported in considerable detail, but the October 1997 anniversary has overshadowed the very many good things that one way or the other have come to the attention of regular listeners to both national and regional radio. In my own area, 'The Birthplace of Radio' (Marconi, Chelmsford), the 'verbal logo' that BBC Essex uses continuously, '78 Vintage' has been blessed with John Gunn's unbroken and knowledgeable hosting for this last period, with vintage Crosby featured every Saturday evening. The Christmas broadcast including two Bing tracks. Which is something that never happens with other artistes. Week after week John plays Crosby requests from a never ending postbag. On behalf of myself and all these other good folk - not just ICC members - thanks, John, for your dedications, and loyalty to the Crosby cause.

Desmond Carrington never fails to feature his own Crosby Corner, and although he doesn't delve too far back into the archives, most of what he plays goes way beyond the so-called 'best of''. Three Bings - "Sing", "Memories" and "I Love To Dance ..." - being played back to back on Sunday the twelfth October.

All the previously reported presenters continued through the last couple of months of the old year, Christmas, and into the new year with selections from the wealth of material now freely available to them courtesy of ICC members. With outstanding contributions from Chris Robinson and Frank Wappat. Though in Frank's case most of his tracks are spun direct from 78s. Much too recent to report here in detail Benny Green devoted most of a February Sunday afternoon's programme to some of the less featured tracks from the United Artists set in his celebration of the composers art, and I hope that will come up for review next time around. In the meantime, with an early spring just around the corner - happy mowing!

Bert Bishop

Keeping Track

A Compact Disc Review by Jim Reilly

If the number of CDs I've got to review this time around is anything to go by 1998 should be another good year on the Crosby front. MCA are proving a great source for albums both in the UK and the USA. I am told that MCA in the UK will be releasing a CD in June which will contain the Bing and Buddy Cole tracks from the albums 'Some Fine Old Chestnuts' and 'New Tricks' which will be very welcome. John McNicholas is doing a fine job with 'The Chronological Bing Crosby' series. Ken Barnes tells me that BMG have purchased the entire Bing Crosby radio shows for Philco, Chesterfield and General Electric from 1946 to 1954 and that he is to be the producer for all the resulting CDs. The beauty of this is that Ken will be working from the 16-inch transcription discs as opposed to 2nd or 3rd generation copies that others have used for previous CDs. The 296 hours of radio material is at present being transferred to DAT (no mean task which may not be completed until the end of the year). No release dates are available at the time of going to press but the first CD is to be devoted to Bing's broadcasts with Al Jolson and is expected to be released in the summer. One thing we can be sure of is that the quality of the CDs will be excellent as Ken is engaging Peter Reynolds to work with him on the digital editing and programming from the DAT tapes. You no doubt will recall that Ken worked with Peter on the 'Memories' and the United Artist albums that received acclaim for their excellent sound quality.

The Chronological Bing Crosby — **Jonzo Records JZCD-15** — **UK**

I'm Hummmin' I'm Whistlin' I'm Singin' (A)
I'm Hummmin' I'm Whistlin' I'm Singin' (B)
Love In Bloom (A)
Love In Bloom (B)
Straight From The Shoulder (A)
Straight From The Shoulder (B)
Give Me A Heart To Sing To (A)
Give Me A Heart To Sing To (B)
I Love You Truly (A)
I Love You Truly (B)
Just A-Wearyin' For You (A)
Just A-Wearyin' For You (B)
Let Me Call You Sweetheart
Someday Sweetheart
The Moon Was Yellow
The Very Thought Of You (A)
The Very Thought Of You (B)
Two Cigarettes In The Dark (A)
Two Cigarettes In The Dark (C)
The Sweetheart Waltz (B)
The Sweetheart Waltz (C)

Running time: 66.07

I am very pleased with this latest issue in the series and can confirm that the quality is excellent. 'Love in Bloom' (B), 'Straight From The Shoulder' (B), 'I Love You Truly' (B), 'Just A-Wearyin' For You' (A), 'The Very Thought Of You' (B), 'Two Cigarettes In The Dark' (C) and 'The Sweetheart Waltz' (B) make their debuts on CD. Most of the of the other titles on this album have made relatively few appearances on CD. The fine notes give the full details of the alternate takes and list matrix numbers etc. Price £10.60 including p&p or two for £21 incl. p&p from Jonzo Records PO Box 212 Harrow Middlesex HA3

7LD. Cheques to be made payable to Jonzo Records. USA and Canadian members can get copies from Wig Wiggins - for address see inside front cover.
Note: Newer UK Members might like to know that all the CDs in the Chronological Series are still available from John McNicholas at Jonzo Records. Those of us who like me have converted our collections almost entirely to compact disc will be pleased to know that John McNicholas has produced CDs of the early Chronological titles that were issued on LP's JZ-1/2 and part of JZ-3. These 2 CDs comprise 40 tracks of Bing's first recordings from 1926 into 1928 and also include five alternate takes not on the original LPs. Additional CDs covering all the material on LP will be issued at regular intervals at the reduced price of £8.00 each plus 50p (p+p). US Members wishing to obtain these CDs should do so through Wig Wiggins.

The Chronological Bing Crosby **Jonzo Records JZCD-1** **UK**

I've Got The Girl
Wistful And Blue
Pretty Lips (BVE 37286-1)
Shanghai Dream Man
That Saxophone Waltz
Pretty Lips (BVE38124-1)
Muddy Water
Side By Side (1)
Side By Side (4)
I'm Coming Virginia (7)
I'm Coming Virginia (9)
I'm In Love Again (2)
I'm In Love Again (3)
Magnolia (1)
Magnolia (2)
Mississippi Mud - I left My Sugar Standing in The Rain (2)
Mississippi Mud - I left My Sugar Standing in The Rain (3)
Sweet Li'l / Ain't She Sweet (2)
Sweet Li'l / Ain't She Sweet (3)
My Blue Heaven

When listening to this CD it is incredible to think that all the titles were recorded some 72 years ago. Apart from the style of singing of these 20's arrangements, the excellent quality makes them sound as if they were recorded only yesterday. After not hearing this material for some time I was surprised how much I enjoyed listening to it all again. Quite a number of tracks are new to CD and I am sure that members will be pleased to add this historic CD to their collections. I think that I'm right in saying that the additional tracks are 'Pretty Lips' (BVE 37286-1), 'I'm In Love Again' (2), 'Magnolia' (2) and 'Sweet Li'l / Ain't She Sweet' (2).
Running Time: 62:13 *Price: £8.50 incl. p+p*

The Chronological Bing Crosby **Jonzo Records JZCD-2** **UK**

The Five Step (2)
The Five Step (3)
The Calinda
It Won't Be Long Now (4)
It Won't Be Long Now (8)
Missouri Waltz
That's Grandma
Miss Annabelle Lee
Changes (2)
Changes (3)
Mary (2)
Mary (4)
Ol' Man River
From Monday On (BVE 41612-1)
From Monday On (BVE 41612-3)
Mississippi Mud (W400034-A)
Make Believe
Poor Butterfly
There Ain't No Sweet Man That's Worth the Salt Of My Tears (2)
There Ain't No Sweet Man That's Worth the Salt Of My Tears (3)

The sound quality is again of a high standard. The only additional track is 'It Won't Be Long Now' (4). Sharp eyed members will also note that 'Ooh Maybe It's You' has been omitted as this is not now considered to be a Bing track. The following titles to the best of my belief are making their debut appearances on CD:- 'The Five Step' (2&3), 'The Calinda', 'It Won't Be Long Now' (4&8), 'Missouri Waltz', 'That's Grandma', 'Miss Annabelle Lee', 'From Monday On' (BVE 41612-1) and 'Poor Butterfly'.
Running Time: 61.20 Price £8.50 incl. p+p

Bing Crosby & Louis Armstrong
Havin' More Fun **Jazz Unlimited JUCD 2035** **Denmark**

Theme / Introduction
Way Down Yonder In New Orleans
A Song Is Born - Louis & Jack Teagarden
Gone Fishin' w Louis Armstrong
La Vie En Rose - Louis Armstrong
Lazy Bones w Louis Armstrong
Baby Won't You Please Come Home - Teagarden
My Honey's Lovin' Arms w Toni Arden
You're Just In Love w Louis Armstrong
Lazy River - Louis Armstrong
Introduction: Bing, Armstrong Teagarden & Venuti talking Panama
Nice Work If You Can Get It - Dinah Shore
Blueberry Hill
Rockin' Chair - Louis Armstrong & Jack Teagarden
Rockin' Chair (parody) w Dinah Shore

I mentioned this one in the last issue of BING. The front sleeve is not one of the best designs that I've ever seen and it almost put me off buying the CD. The quality is good and again I found this to be an enjoyable album with all the tracks coming from Chesterfield Shows. UK members wanting this CD should be able to obtain it from the Record Centre, Birmingham.
Running Time: 56:35 Price £12.25

An early joint venture for Bing and Satchmo.

Louis Armstrong & Bing Crosby
Fun With Bing & Louis 1949-1951 **Jasmine Records JASCD 336** **UK**

Theme & Introduction
Lazy River - Louis Armstrong
Lazy Bones (1st version) w Louis Armstrong
Baby Won't You Please Come Home - Teagarden
Blueberry Hill (1st version) w Louis Armstrong
Lazy Bones (2nd version) w Louis Armstrong
Blueberry Hill (2nd version) w Louis Armstrong
Rockin' Chair - Louis & Jack Teagarden
Rockin' Chair (parody) w Dinah Shore, Louis Armstrong & Jack Teagarden
La Vie En Rose - Louis Armstrong
My Honey's Lovin' Arms w Toni Arden
You're Just In Love w Louis Armstrong
On The Sunny Side Of The Street - Louis Armstrong
Gone Fishin' (1st version) w Louis Armstrong
A Song Is Born - Louis Armstrong & Jack Teagarden
Gone Fishin' (2nd version) w Louis Armstrong
I Get Ideas - Louis Armstrong
A Kiss To Build A Dream On w Louis Armstrong

This CD contains all the Crosby tracks that were on the two LPs "Havin' Fun" and "More Fun", although it does not have all of the non-Bing content that appeared on these albums. The quality is good and overall I feel that it is better value than the other two Bing & Louis albums I've reviewed here and in the last issue of BING. This CD should be available from your local record shops. Running Time: 75:34 Price £8.99

The Very Best Of Bing Crosby **MCA MCBD19538** **UK**

Pennies From Heaven
Mexicali Rose
Stardust
Deep In The Heart Of Texas
Please
Moonlight Becomes You
Begin The Beguine
Swinging On A Star
Long Ago And Far Away
Don't Fence Me In w The Andrews Sisters
Too-Ra-Loo-Ra-Loo-Ral
The Road To Morocco w Bob Hope
The Bells Of St Mary's
Where The Blue Of The Night
Ac-Cent-Tchu-Ate The Positive w The Andrews Sisters
Galway Bay
Alexander's Ragtime Band w Al Jolson
Ballerina
Dear Hearts And Gentle People
Sunshine Cake w Carole Richards
Gone Fishin' w Louis Armstrong
April Showers
Harbour Lights
White Christmas

This album is on sale exclusively in Woolworth's stores. We get a lot of the same titles that appear time and time again, but a few rarities such as 'Long Ago And Far Away', 'Begin The Beguine', 'Ballerina', 'April Showers' and 'Sunshine Cake' (making its debut

on a Bing CD) have been included to add to the enjoyment. The quality on two of the tracks could have been improved, although generally the overall sound quality is good. This album is also available on cassette. Look out for the timing error of the first track ('Pennies From Heaven') - don't be fooled it is not the longer version used here. Running Time: 70:35 Price: CD - £5.99 Cassette - £3.99

The Best Of Bing Crosby & The Andrews Sisters **MCA Half Moon Series HMNCD 029** **UK**

Ciribiribin
Don't Fence Me In
Apalachicola FLA
The Three Caballeros
Have I Told You Lately That I Love You
South Rampart Street Parade
Sparrow In The Tree Top
Pistol Packin' Mama
Vict'ry Polka
Ac-Cent-Tchu-Ate The Positive
(Get Your Kicks On) Route 66
Anything You Can Do (I Can Do Better) *
Along The Navajo Trail
South America Take It Away
High On The List
You Don't Have To Know The Language
Tallahassee
Forsaking All Others
There's No Business Like Show Business *
Cool Water
Jingle Bells
Santa Claus Is Comin' To Town
Mele Kalikimaka
Here Comes Santa Claus

* with Dick Haymes

The 24 tracks that appear on this album were all on the double CD 'Bing Crosby And The Andrews Sisters - Their Complete Recordings Together' MCAD2-11503 issued in 1996. Most serious collectors will probably have the double album, although as an import it tended to be very expensive in the UK for those on lower budgets. By comparison this budget priced shortened version is good value and the quality is on par with the original CDs. I prefer to see the Christmas titles placed at the end of the CD rather than mixed as with the chronological running order of the double album.

Running Time: 71:42 Price £6.00 approx.

Bing Crosby My Favorite Irish Songs **MCA Special Products MCAD21048** **USA**

Danny Boy
Oh 'Tis Sweet To Think w Ann Blyth
The Rose Of Tralee
Dear Old Donegal
McNamara's Band
When Irish Eyes Are Smiling
Too-Ra-Loo-Ra-Loo-Ral (1944 version)
How Can You Buy Killarney
Galway Bay
St Patrick's Day Parade

I was expecting this CD to only contain tracks from that other MCA album 'Top O' The Morning His Irish Collection', whereas we have a notable exception with the inclusion of 'Oh 'Tis Sweet To Think'. This song has never appeared on CD before and of course came from the film Top O' The Morning. Interestingly they have used the seldom-heard 1944 version of the song 'Too-Ra-Loo-Ra-Loo-Ral'. It is a very nice album but I fear that UK members may findit difficult to obtain, although I don't think that this should be the case for US Members. It is good to see that the ICC Bing Logo appears on the inside of the front sleeve - I am pretty sure that this is the first time it has appeared on a commercially produced CD.

Running Time:29:40 Price £6 Approx.

Top O' The Morning - His Irish Collection **MCA Universal MCAD 11406** **UK**

Contents as per USA issue with the same number and listed in BING 112

For newer members who may not have that issue of BING, I should just say that this is a full collection of Bing's Irish songs that appeared on the LPs 'When Irish Eyes Are Smiling' and 'Shillelaghs And Shamrocks' with the exception of 'Tobermory Bay' and with the addition of 'Too-Ra-Loo-Ra-Loo-Ral' (1944 version) & 'Rosaleen ' Price: £9.99

Bing Crosby Goldies (2CDs) **Intermusic SA GLD 63335**

CD1

Soon
Down By The River
Red Sails In The Sunset
I'm An Old Cowhand
Pennies From Heaven
A Fine Romance
Blue Hawaii
Too Marvellous For Words
It's The Natural Thing To Do
The Moon Got In My Eyes
Bob White
Swing Low Sweet Chariot

CD2

I've Got A Pocketful Of Dreams
Mexicali Rose
What's New
You Must Have Been A Beautiful Baby
Sierra Sue
Trade Winds
Only Forever
New San Antonio Rose
Deep In The Heart Of Texas
Be Careful It's My Heart
White Christmas
Moonlight Becomes You

Derek Perkins let me know about this album although I have been unable to get a copy through my normal sources. ' Swing Low Sweet Chariot' gets a rare outing otherwise all other tracks have made regular appearances on CD. All good stuff but nothing new! I can't give you a price for this double album or any further details.

Bing Crosby Duets And More **FMCG (Tring International) FMC009** **UK**

Gone Fishin w Louis Armstrong
A Fine Romance w Dixie Lee
Put It There Pal w Bob Hope
The Road To Morocco w Bob Hope
Connecticut w Judy Garland
In The Cool Cool Cool Of The Evening w J Wyman
Life Is Just A Bowl Of Cherries w The Mills Bros. and The Boswell Sisters
Dinah w The Mills Bros.
The Moon Came Up With A Great Idea w Peggy Lee
The Spaniard That Blighted My Life w Al Jolson
Ac-Cent-Tchu-Ate The Positive w The Andrews Sisters
A Couple Of Song And Dance Men w Fred Astaire
Brother Can You Spare A Dime
White Christmas

There is nothing new on this CD, the quality is good and the combination makes for good listening, although I find the inclusion of 'Brother Can You Spare A Dime' and 'White Christmas' don't quite fit with the rest of the bill of fare. There's a nice mistake on the back sleeve - The Andrews Sisters are shown as The Adams Sisters, Like all these cheap CDs you may have trouble finding it in the shops and all I can suggest is that you keep looking in the hope that you will be lucky.

Running Time: 40:37 Price: £2.99

Great Movie Themes

Blue Skies - Rhythm On The River **Original Soundtracks CD60025**

Blue Skies:
Overture Blue Skies: soundtrack Orchestra
A Pretty Girl Is Like A Melody -Danced by Astaire
I've Got My Captain Working For Me Now w Billy De Wolfe
You'd Be Surprised - Olga San Juan
All By Myself w Joan Caulfield
A Serenade To An Old Fashioned Girl - J Caulfield
Putting On The Ritz - Fred Astaire
Cuba (I'll See You In CUBA) w Olga San Juan
A Couple Of Song And Dance Men w Fred Astaire
You Keep Coming Back Like A Song
Blue Skies
Everybody Step
Getting Nowhere
Heat Wave - Fred Astaire, Olga San Juan
Any Bonds Today / This Is The Army Mr Jones / White Christmas
Finale: You Keep Coming Back Like A Song w Joan Caulfield
Rhythm On The River
What Would Shakespeare Have Said
That's For Me - Mary Martin
Only Forever
When The Moon Comes Over Madison Square
Rhythm On The River
Ain't It A Shame About Mame - Mary Martin
I Don't Want To Cry Anymore - Mary Martin
Finale: Only Forever w Mary Martin

This is an immensely enjoyable CD with very good sound reproduction. I suppose that if I a had a small criticism to make it would be that one or two of the tracks ends could have been faded slightly better. The beauty of this soundtrack album is that you can sit back and listen to it and really visualise the film scenes throughout. It is well worth the money.

Running Time: 61:28 Price: £5.99

Bing Crosby
His Greatest Hits And Finest Performances (4CDs) **Reader's Digest 1-800-499-9656** **USA**
CD 1 Swinging On A Star - Bing's Greatest Hits Moonlight Becomes You, Remember Me, I Can't Begin To Tell You, Now Is The Hour, Sierra Sue, I've Got A Pocketful Of Dreams, The Moon Got In My Eyes, It's Been A Long Long Time, White Christmas, You Must Have Been A Beautiful Baby, I Love You, Only Forever, Sunday Monday Or Always, Swinging On A Star, It's Easy To Remember, Sweet Leilani, Pennies From Heaven, San Fernando Valley, Red Sails In The Sunset, I'll Be Seeing You
CD 2 Put It There Pal - Bing and His Friends Play A Simple Melody w Gary Crosby, Pistol Packin' Mama w The Andrews Sisters, Small Fry w Johnny Mercer, There'll Be A Hot Time In The Town Of Berlin w The Andrews Sisters, The Whiffenpoof Song, Road To Morocco w Bob Hope, Don't Fence Me In w The Andrews Sisters, The Spaniard That Blighted My Life w Al Jolson, Ac-Cent-Tchu-Ate The Positive w The Andrews Sisters, Bob White w Connie Boswell, People Will Say We're In Love w Trudy Irwin, South America Take It Away w The Andrews Sisters, Sam's Song w Gary Crosby, Chicago Style w Bob Hope, Along The Navajo Trail w The Andrews Sisters, Alexander's Ragtime Band w Connie Boswell, Is You Is Or Is You Ain't (Ma Baby) w The Andrews Sisters, In The Cool Cool Cool Of The Evening w Jane Wyman, Silver Bells w Carole Richards, Put It There Pal w Bob Hope
CD 3 Too Marvellous For Words - All-Time Crosby Classics Some Enchanted Evening, Too-Ra-Loo-Ra-Loo-Ral, Personality, June In January, Deep In The Heart Of Texas, Galway Bay, It's The Natural Thing To Do, MacNamara's Band, Amor, I'm An Old Cow Hand, Please, Where The Blue Of The Night, Dear Hearts And Gentle People, Soon, On The Atchison Topeka And The Santa Fe, I'll Be Home For Christmas, Too Marvellous For Words, Far Away Places, Around The World, Silent Night
CD 4 The Radio Years - Bing And His Buddies On The Air Medley: Louise/Mimi w Maurice Chevalier, I Don't Know Why w Lauren Bacall, Moonlight Bay w Gary Crosby, If I Knew You Were Coming I Would Have Baked A Cake w Bob Hope, On Top Of Old Smokey w Burl Ives, Surrey With The Fringe On Top w Helen O'Connell, Young At Heart, Two To Tango w Rosemary Clooney, You Gotta Start Off Each Day With A Song w Jimmy Durante, Vaya Con Dios, Medley: Lazy River/Paper Doll w The Mills Bros., Hand Holdin' Music w Rudy Vallee and Walter O'Keefe, On A Slow Boat To China w Peggy Lee, It Might As Well Be Spring w George Burns, That's A Plenty w Connee Boswell, I Can Dream Can't I w The Andrews Sisters, Clancy Lowered The Boom w Dennis Day, For Me And My Gal w Judy Garland, Till We Meet Again w Patti Page, May The Good Lord Bless And Keep You w Nat King Cole and The Andrews Sisters
I am given to understand that this set of CDs came about due to the efforts of US Member Ernest Sutkowski in contacting the executives of Reader's Digest CD Division. The material comes from the LP sets that were issued by Reader's Digest, "Bing Sings" and "Bing Sings Again". I have not been able to hear this set of CDs but am told that the quality is good. Price: $54.96

Bing Crosby With Ella Fitzgerald &
Peggy Lee featuring Fred Astaire (2CDs) **Avid Records AVC624** **UK**
Previously issued by Parrot as 'My Happiness' and 'It's A Good Day' PARCD 001/002
Bing Crosby & His Hollywood Guests **Avid Records AVC625** **UK**
Previously issued by Parrot as 'Hollywood Guys & Dolls' Vol.1 and 2 PARCD005/006
Bing Crosby With Judy Garland & AL Jolson **Avid Records AVC626** **UK**
Previously issued by Parrot as 'When You're Smiling' and 'Let Me Sing And I'm Happy' PARCD003/004
If you missed out on the Parrot albums you won't want to miss these three double CDs which are very good value at £10.99 each. The quality is very good and they make very good listening. They should be available in your local record shops.

Bing Crosby King Of The Crooners	**Javelin HADCD219**	**UK**
Dinah	Did You Ever See A Dream Walking	
Temptation	I'm An Old Cow Hand	
Please	St Louis Blues	
I've Got The World On A String	Where The Blue Of The Night	
Pennies From Heaven	Wrap Your Troubles In Dreams	
How Deep Is The Ocean	Some Of These Days	
Blue Hawaii	A Ghost Of A Chance	
Thanks	Someday Sweetheart	

This aptly titled CD has only just come to my attention although it was released in 1997. All the titles have appeared on CD many times previously. No one can fail to like this compilation of Bing standards and the quality is good throughout. I am sorry that I can't tell you how much it will cost you but I think you should be able to obtain a copy if you order it from your local store. *Running Time: 49:56*

Scheduled to be released - April 1998

Bing Crosby Going Hollywood Vol. 1 (2 CDs)	**Jasmine Records Jascd 108/9**	**UK**
CD1		
Music Hath Charms (s/t)	The Day You Came Along	
Mississippi Mud (s/t)	Thanks	
When the Folks High-Up...(s/t)	Buckin' The Wind / Thanks (s/t)	
Out of Nowhere	I Guess It Had To Be That Way	
Just One More Chance	Our Big Love Scene	
Dinah	Beautiful Girl	

Here Lies Love
Please
Down the Old Ox Road
Moonstruck
Learn to Croon
Boo Boo Boo (s/t)
Just An Echo In The Valley
Going Hollywood (s/t)
We'll Make Hay While The Sun Shines
After Sundown
Temptation

CD 2

It's A Lie / A Sailor Can't Be True... (s/t)
I Positively Refuse To Sing (s/t)
May I?
She Reminds Me Of You
Goodnight Lovely Little Lady
Love Thy Neighbour
Once In A Blue Moon
Straight From The Shoulder (s/t with K. Carlisle)
Love In Bloom
I'm Hummin', I'm Whistlin', I'm Singin'
June In January
With Every Breath I Take
Love Is Just Around The Corner
Soon
Down By The River
Swanee River
It's Easy To Remember
Two For Tonight
Takes Two To Make A Bargain
From The Top Of Your Head
Without A Word Of Warning
I Wish I Were Aladdin (s/t)
I Wished On The Moon (s/t)

This double album covers the songs from Bing's feature films starting with 'The King of Jazz' through to 'The Big Broadcast Of 1936'. It has been put together for Jasmine by Geoff Milne who tells me that this will be a collection consisting probably of 5 CDs covering the out of copyright material that Bing sings in the films. It will not include songs from the Mack Sennett shorts. A mixture of soundtrack (annotated as s/t in the listing above) and commercial recordings has been used on these albums i.e. if the soundtrack is very short, a commercial recording has been used. Interestingly the commercial recording of 'Dinah' has been used but the Mills Bros. have been edited out as they don't appear with Bing in the film 'The Big Broadcast'. The other issues will follow later in the year. Price will be around £14.

GUEST APPEARANCES

Rosemary Clooney

Come On-A My House 7CD Box Set **Bear Family Records BCD 15 895-7 GK (Germany)**

CD1-6 No Bing Content **CD7** - 32 Tracks (6 Bing) Santa Claus, White Christmas, Snow, I'd Rather See A Minstrel Show, Count Your Blessings Instead Of Sheep and Gee I Wish I Was Back In The Army

I am indebted to Brian Henson and Etty Gits for letting me know of this CD which includes a Bing song hitherto unknown to collectors. It is a very short number that was written for inclusion in the film White Christmas entitled "Santa Claus" and Bing sings it with Danny Kaye. The fact that it has never surfaced before makes it somewhat of a mystery and for most members it would seem that it will remain so as the 7CD set is very expensive. Unfortunately the individual CD with the Bing tracks cannot be purchased separately. If you have the money and are a fan of Rosemary Clooney it could be money well spent for it is probably the definitive collection of Rosemary's recording career. With most of her well-known songs and her long association with Bing (that has endeared her to Crosby collectors) I expect most of us would like to buy this set. After all Rosemary Clooney is one of the finest female singers of our time. Unfortunately there is not room here to list the 200 odd titles. The quality of the 6 Bing tracks is excellent. I really feel that it is a great pity that the set could not have been made smaller so that it would have been more affordable to collectors from both camps. I hope that I haven't put you off buying it for how else will you be able to obtain that elusive new Bing title to add to your collections. Perhaps Christmas will come early this year and someone will buy it for you. Price £135

Les Paul (2CDs)

The Trio's Complete Decca Recordings Plus (1936-47) MCA MCAD2-11708 **USA**

50 Tracks (7 Bing) **Disc 1** It's Been A Long Long Time; Whose Dream Are You? **Disc 2** Pretending; Gotta Get Me Somebody To Love(L4184A); Gotta Get Me Somebody To Love(L4355A); What Am I Gonna Do About You and Drifting And Dreaming

This is a very interesting double album that includes all the seven titles Bing recorded for Decca with the trio. It was previously assumed that "Day By Day" and "Prove it by The Things That You Do" were recorded with Les Paul but research has proved this not to be the case. It is nevertheless quite a collector's item as only one of these seven Bing tracks has ever appeared on CD before - this being "It's Been A Long Long Time". The quality is excellent throughout and I found the album made enjoyable listening. I am indebted to Wig Wiggins for sending me a copy.

Louis Armstrong & Friends - You Rascal You **MCA Half Moon Series HMNCD016** **UK**

22Tracks (2 Bing) Pennies From Heaven, Gone Fishin' (and 3 Gary Crosby) Lazy Bones, Ko Ko Mo and Easy Street

Merry Christmas **Mastertone 1109** **USA**

21 Tracks (5 Bing) The First Noel, Good King Wenceslas, Deck The Halls, God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen and Joy To The World

US member Dennis Kane very kindly sent me a copy of this CD and I found it to be very enjoyable. Some of Bing's tracks come from the LP 'A Christmas Sing With Bing Around The World'. The quality is vastly better than the last Mastertone CD I reviewed. There are however one or two clicks on a couple of tracks but this does not spoil the overall enjoyment of a nice Christmas compilation. Other stars that appear on the album include The Drifters, Rosemary Clooney, Gene Autry,

Faron Young and Brook Benton. I don't however quite know what to make of The Drifters' version of 'White Christmas' - it's definitely different. Running Time: 55:15 Price: Not Known

Frank Sinatra Duets **Delta Music CD6098** **UK**

21 Tracks (3 Bing) Parody Medley, sentimental Medley Pt1 and Pt2 *These tracks have appeared on about three earlier CDs one of which is 'Frank Sinatra The Live Duets 1943-1957'. Other artists appearing include Nat King Cole, Margaret Whiting, Louis Armstrong etc. My thanks go to Ray Forster for the info.* Price: £2.99

The Late Derek Parkes CDs

The sale of this material has caused me some headaches, and it has taken up a considerable amount of my time. Quite a number of members have mentioned in passing that Derek owed them money. Although I sympathise with these people I regret that there is nothing that I can do about this. As has been previously mentioned, Derek's Club was a privately run club and had no connection with the ICC. Due to his knowledge of the industry, Derek was an ideal man to review Records and CDs and this was his connection with the ICC - as a contributor to the magazine just like me. As a mark of respect the ICC agreed to assist with the sales of his records and CDs.

HELP! I thought that I had got things really organised until I had some CDs returned with a note saying that the person had already received his order. I would therefore be extremely grateful if the person who paid for CDs and has not received them would contact me so that I can rectify the situation at the earliest possible time. They would need to tell which CDs they ordered and the value of the cheque sent with the order. I will of course refund any cost of postage involved.

Video (VHS) A Bing Crosby Christmas - Like The Ones We Used To Know VCI VC4137 **UK**

It was quite a pleasant surprise to find this video in the shops in November. You tend to look at the music sections without much hope of ever finding anything dedicated to Bing. This in the main is an excellent programme with commentary by Gene Kelly and Kathryn Crosby. One of the nice things about it is that we are treated to seeing the second family grow up through sketches extracted from Bing's Christmas Shows. I have two complaints; the first being that there is a nasty disruption of the sound and picture when Bing sings "Children" (all copies appear to have the same fault) and secondly, Bing doesn't get to sing many songs all the way through. It would also have been nice if the programme was a little longer. Nevertheless it is a very worthwhile addition to anyone's collection and I recommend it to all UK members who collect videos. The programme was shown on American television some time ago so it should be familiar to our US Members. I hope that it will still be available through your local store, although you may have to order it quoting the make and number. The video cassette cover shows the contents to be as follows: A Time to Be Jolly, Do You Hear What I Hear, Let It Snow Let It Snow Let It Snow, Hark The Herald Angels Sing, Jingle Bells, Jing Jing Jing Of The Jingle Bells, Style, Camaraderie, Silver Bells, What Do You Want For Christmas, Talk To The Animals, Listen To The Bells, Sleigh Ride, The Christmas Song, We Three Kings Of Orient Are, We Need A Little Christmas, (There's No Place Like) Home For The Holidays, A Christmas Carol (Christmas Is A Coming),Children, Doin' The Bing, Wait Till The Sun Shines Nellie, Ho Ho Ho Merry Christmas, Deck The Halls, Home Sweet Home, Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas, Cripple Creek, A Pair Of Loafers, Snow Time, White Christmas, The Quiet Man, Peace On Earth/Little Drummer Boy, One Winter's Night, Some Children See Him, Mid Winter, O' Holy Night, The First Noel, The King Of The Angels, Silent Night, Joy To The World, White Christmas.

Many thanks to Charlie Baillie, Wig Wiggins, Ernest Sutkowski, Phil Clarke and others too numerous to mention. Until next time around I wish you all good listening.

Jim Reilly

The Way We Were

This is the occasional series where we look at extracts from Crosby magazines of the past. On this occasion, we pick out reviews of Bing's records as seen in the pages of the early Crosby magazines. This article follows on nicely from Trevor Wagstaff's researches in the pages of 'The Gramophone' as it picks up where Trevor left off in BING 116.

Our first extract comes from 'Crosby Post' of May 1953 when in 'The Groaner in the Groove' section it was stated that "Arthur Allen again deputises for our reviewer Les Gaylor." Among the records examined were the following:

"05016 'Experience' (Bing solo) and 'Personality' (Bing) are both Van Heusen, Burke compositions specially written for fellow traveller Dorothy Lamour to trill in a couple of 'Road' pictures. Les Gaylor has been 'ticking' at Decca Record Co. for a long time to get these two sides released as sung by Bing. Of course, they are well put over by a personality with vocal experience but, I prefer Dot Lamour to put over this slick stuff."

Interesting to see how long it had taken for these songs to be released as they were recorded in 1947 and 1946 respectively. Les Gaylor was pushing the record companies for more action then as well! By Christmas 1953, Colin Pugh had taken over as reviewer and his section was called "The Crosby Waxworks." Amongst the five records considered by Colin were the four songs Bing recorded from 'The King and I' and Colin gave these his seal of approval with particular plaudits allotted to the composers, Rodgers and Hammerstein. He went on to comment on:

"The Magic Window" is from Bing's film, 'Little

Boy Lost' at present doing the rounds of the country's cinemas. It is on Brunswick 05203. It's a simple little ditty for children which, no doubt, fits well into the film, but listening to it on record, I find it very insipid. It must be said in all fairness that Bing sings it very well indeed. Much of my surprise is explained when I look at the names of the two who composed it. I don't want to be accused of repeating myself, and I'd hate the composers in question to think that there was anything personal in my bias, but I don't give you three guesses as to their identity."

Well, so Colin didn't like Burke and Van Heusen. I thought that they had written some very good songs in their earlier years but they seemed to lose their inspiration as time passed with 'Road to Bali' and 'Hoot Mon' representing their nadir to my ears. By 1954, Bing's record releases were beginning to slow down and Colin's column in the June 1954 edition of the Crosby Post read thus:

"Failing anything actually new for April, and no mid-April issue at all, we are relieved to find we have one release for May bearing two very welcome sides on Brunswick 05294 - 'Haunted Heart' and 'Maria Bonita'. The former is long overdue being of 1947 vintage whilst the latter is over three years since it was recorded. These two songs are Latin American rhythms, both being rhumbas, which obviously accounts for their coupling.

'Haunted Heart' was recorded on December 31st 1947 and bears matrix number L4795. Bing sings it to the accompaniment of John Scott Trotter's orchestra and here is where I think the number falls down. Much as I like this orchestra for ordinary love songs and ballads, personally I don't think it suited to this type of rhythm. I'm afraid this lack of atmosphere transferred its colour to Bing who we've all heard do much better than this. The overall effect is somewhat dreary. However, do not be put off by such criticism, for in spite of everything the recording provides quite average listening.

'Maria Bonita' brings us Bing with Bando Da Lua, and what a contrast to its backing! This side has everything the other one lacks. The tune itself is more lively and more tuneful. The accompaniment is more appropriate with an added vocal assistance. Bing is in better voice and sounds far more 'chirpy'. On the whole this is an excellent example of this type of rhythm and can be recommended to those who favour such."

Good balanced reviews from Colin and he was still at it in the October 1955 issue of 'Crosby Post'.

"Well. let's face it - Bing Crosby issues are practically at a standstill. For two issues of CROSBY POST now, all we have had is one new release. This can hardly be calculated to keep Bing in the public eye as a popular vocalist, and if issues are to continue at this low ebb, the younger generation will soon be asking who he is. Unfortunately, this solitary issue, instead of being a little gem who's quality compensates to some extent for its rarity, is a very ordinary, and I might say disappointing coupling. The collectors will buy it automatically of course, but for the more casual buyer of Bing's discs, for one who only obtains those to which he is accustomed to associate with Bing as being ideal Crosby material, I cannot honestly recommend it. On the other hand there will be a definite section of record buyers who will think that this disc has everything. Ardent swing and jazz enthusiasts will plump for this in a big way. With the Les Brown Orchestra who give it everything they've got (including the 'kitchen sink'), Bing revives a couple of old numbers and. mark you, does some excellent vocalising....If Bing could sing jazz in the old days, this disc proves he still can today. The number of the record is 05451 and the titles are 'All She'd Say Was "Uhm Hum" and 'She Is The Sunshine of Virginia'."

Colin regularly mentioned the 10" LPs of Bing's old material which kept surfacing but it was not until the December 1956 issue of Crosby Post that we heard about LPs of new material. By then, Bill Taylor was the record reviewer and the old title of 'The Groaner in the Groove' was being employed again. After discussing the 'Songs I Wish I Had Sung' album, Bill continued:

"I have just received the American copy of 'Bing Sings Whilst Bregman Swings' on the new Verve label. I believe that it will be issued over here later on by HMV. Here again are 12 songs for your money, this time none of them has Bing recorded before commercially. Bing himself seems to have a very high opinion of Buddy Bregman. According to the sleeve notes, Bregman conceived the idea of Bing doing this particular disc, orchestrated the songs, and conducted a hand-picked group of Hollywood's foremost musicians. Here again is another example of Bing free-lancing, and with due respect to Decca, shows how it can stimulate an artist to wander a bit. Some of the songs, I must admit, I have never even heard before. Perhaps it's my lack of a musical 'heddication', but one or two appear to be essentially for the American palate.

I expect by now, the majority of you have heard at least one or two, of the numbers from 'High Society'. All the DJs are pushing them out with great zest, and very few reviewers give a mild tribute to them. In my opinion, the finest value for your money at the moment is 'True Love' backed with 'Well, Did You Evah' on 78 or 45,

you has your choice. May I quote Frank here, he says "On 'True Love' Bing proves he's back at the top in one of the best vocals he has done in years." I heartily agree, Frank, and as proof it is already in the Top Twenty."

"Frank" was of course Frank Murphy who at that time was described as 'Active Co-President' with Dot Hardiman. Dot's address was Midland Bank Chambers, 120 High Street, Smethwick, Staffs. From 1961 to 1968, I worked for Lloyds Bank next door and went into the Midland Bank every day. I was a Crosby fan then but I did not know of any Bing clubs. A great pity that I did not come across Dot then. Bill Taylor was still in the groove with the Groaner in the April 1959 edition and he first of all made a contentious comment before giving a view that will probably have unanimous support from the membership.

"I seem to be in a slight minority when I stated that I was disappointed with 'Gigi' but I still stand by what I said before. The lovely deep notes are there admittedly, but I still say it's not a good Bing! I shall probably stir up something on the 12" LP RCA -RD 27105 which I firmly believe is one of the best he has done recently. Rosemary Clooney seems to have a similar effect on the 'Groaner' as Satchmo. Hear them cha-cha on 'Brazil' and you'll see what I mean."

No arguments from me about the 'Fancy Meeting You Here' album but I can't agree with Bill about 'Gigi'. Take a look at Fred Reynolds' comments on 'Gigi' in Part four of 'The Crosby Collection'.

"An introductory piano leads to an outstanding chorus by Bing in which his faultless phrasing of the revelatory lyrics and eminent melody is a superb achievement. All the lines show a profound understanding of the realisation, as expressed in Lerner lyrics not included in this recording, that the babe, child and girl has now blossomed like a flower. The dramatic pause after the first syllable of the word 'breathless' is particularly effective."

Could anyone say more? Finally, let's finish where we began - with Les Gaylor. Crosby Post for June 1959 contained 'An Appeal to the Membership' by Les in which he complained about the lack of Bing issues and suggested that Decca should issue some of the 200 tracks made for CBS Radio with Buddy Cole. He appealed to all members to write to Decca for unissued material to be put out on record. Les kept the pressure up until the 1970s when Ken Barnes did eventually use 72 of the Bing and Buddy tracks. As you will know, Les is still looking to get more of those tracks with Buddy Cole issued. You may already have read in his article in this magazine, that Les has just had another success with the 'Memories' CD. Has anyone ever done more to pressurise record companies to issue Bing's records than Les? Answers on a post card to the Editor.

Malcolm Macfarlane

BING ON LASERDISC

Ken Barnes takes a look at two more Bing films from his laserdisc collection.

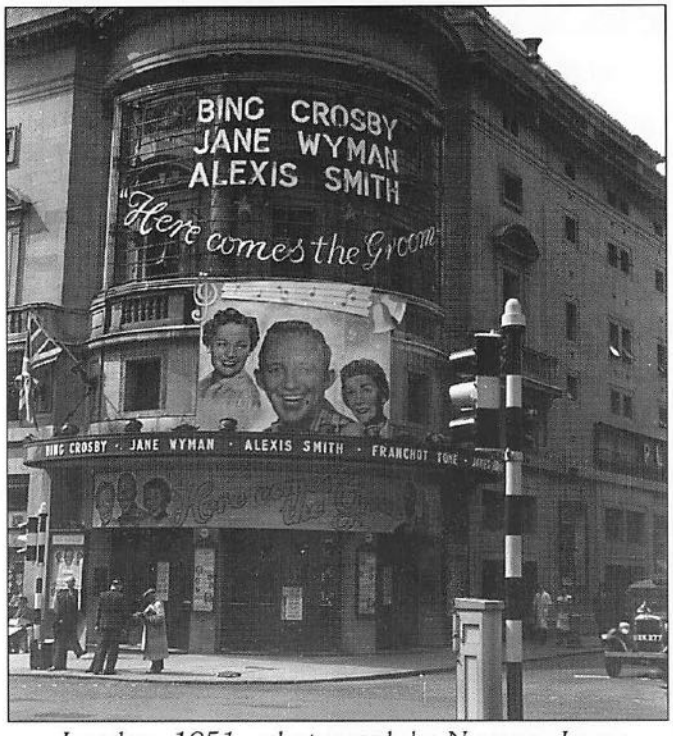
HERE COMES THE GROOM (1951) (Paramount)
JUST FOR YOU (1952) (Paramount)

Prior to playing through these two films, I took a glance at the book 'The Films of Bing Crosby' by Robert Bookbinder and found myself in almost total disagreement with the author. He praised the first film and dismissed the second. The great thing about laser is that by using the random access facility you can call up any part of a film and analyse it. These two films - both co-starring Bing and Jane Wyman - would never make anyone's list of all-time classics.

HERE COMES THE GROOM was Bing's second film with famed director, Frank Capra and his first with Wyman. It's hard to believe that Capra - the brilliant multi Oscar-winning director of such all-time classics as "It Happened One Night," "Mr. Deeds Goes To Town" and " It's A Wonderful Life" is the same man who directed this clumsy mish mash. The wafer-thin plot involves Bing as a big-hearted journalist who adopts two orphans while in Paris and then flies to the USA to wed his fiance (Jane Wyman) and present her with a ready-made family (whether she wants it or not). The immigration authorities tell Bing that if he doesn't marry within five days of arriving in the States, the children will be shipped back to France on the first available plane. Bing sees that as no problem but Miss Wyman, who got tired of waiting for him, is now engaged to Franchot Tone (who just happens to have 40 million dollars in his account). Bing has just five days to make her change her mind and the film grinds its way slowly and tediously to a conclusion that is never in doubt.

The best way to view the film is to start it 30 minutes in because the story - such as it is - doesn't start until Bing and the kids arrive in New York. The first half-hour in Paris is particularly sluggish and we have to suffer a completely unnecessary sequence involving soprano, Anna Maria Alberghetti and a number of other surplus script devices. Bing, however, does lighten the load a little with his delightful rendering of "Your Own Little House" (replete with incisive allusions to Durante and Chevalier) and, on the plane, he sings "Misto Cristofo Colombo" surrounded by a few familiar friends including Dorothy Lamour, Phil Harris and the great Louis Armstrong (Paramount probably felt that Bing needed all the help he could get at this point. But just 23 seconds of Satchmo is an inadequate exchange for 7 laborious minutes of Alberghetti)

It has to be said, however, that Bing, Jane and an excellent supporting cast all work very hard but their efforts are defeated by Capra's snail-paced direction, clumsy editing and a poor script. The songs by Livingston and Evans are far below the standards set by Burke and Van Heusen. Somebody at Paramount realised this and dug up a sprightly novelty song by Johnny Mercer and Hoagy Carmichael (which had been written in 1948 for an unproduced Betty Hutton film). "In The Cool, Cool Of The Evening " saved the picture and went on to win an Oscar for Best Song.



London, 1951 - photograph by Norman Jones

Bookbinder claims the film is "a well-constructed screen comedy." And goes on to say "This is almost entirely because of Frank Capra's sensitive and intelligent handling." I can't help wondering if he had actually seen the picture or was simply quoting the press handouts. Speaking for myself, I couldn't agree less.

On the subject of Crosby and Wyman's next film Bookbinder has this to say "JUST FOR YOU contains no memorable songs, and Elliot Nugent's direction lacks style and conviction...." Not true. As a film, it may not be a masterpiece but the direction and editing ensure that the whole piece is played at a cracking pace that keeps the interest from scene to scene. Director, Nugent doesn't miss a trick. All of the musical numbers are well-staged. And, after the success of Gene Kelly's "An American In Paris" no screen musical of the '50s was completed without a ballet sequence and "Just For You" is no exception. It features a particularly full-blooded Mexican ballet with colourful orchestration and energetic dancing taking up a full six minutes of screen time. Bing, however, does not participate in that but he does handle his songs well.

As for the songs, Harry Warren and Leo Robin turned out a more than serviceable score with the kind of good tunes and witty lyrics we expect from top songwriters. "Zing A Little Zong" was clearly intended as a follow-up to "Cool, Cool, Cool" and while it missed out on the Oscar, it remains a nice piece of writing and is far better staged than "Cool." Also it was a sizeable hit for Bing and Jane. So what is Bookbinder talking about ?

JUST FOR YOU is significant in that it was the first film in which Bing made a definite concession to his age with a touch of grey at the temples. He plays a successful Broadway writer/producer who is having trouble with his children (a partial reflection of his own private life). His son (played by Bob Arthur) wants to be a songwriter but lacks the experience. Eventually, however, he makes good by composing the film's title song. But it seemed to me that this was no great achievement since the soundtrack has been feeding him - and us - snatches of the melody all through the picture. Not to mention the fact that we've also heard it over the titles.

It's interesting to note that Bing's daughter is played by Natalie Wood just as she was saying goodbye to her child star status and a few years before she began playing more adult parts. It's also fun to see Ethel Barrymore who plays some amusing scenes with Bing. The film is based on a story by one of America's true literary giants, Stephen Vincent Benet although there isn't much literary worth in Robert Carson's functional screenplay. But at least it's not boring and the whole thing moves along at quite a clip. Incidentally, the ever-trustworthy Bookbinder lists the film's running time as 95 minutes. It is, in fact, 104 minutes but, unlike "Groom" it seems like 95 minutes.

One story concerning this film was related to me in 1975 when I had lunch with Harry Warren. He told me that Bing had originally wanted Johnny Mercer to do the lyrics This was at a time when Johnny was mad at Bing for some reason. Unaware of this fact, Warren contacted the great lyricist and explained the situation. Mercer promptly replied "Go tell Crosby to screw himself." So Warren passed the message on to the star. Without batting an eyelid, Bing said "Leo Robin's pretty good. Try him."

So there you have it. Two more Bing films on laser disc. Both are well-mastered and deliver a good picture and digital mono soundtracks. I just wish that "Groom" had

Jane Wyman enjoys a joke with Ethel Barrymore and Bing.

been a better effort. But if, like me, you're a Crosby fan you'll probably add it to your collection anyway.

Ken Barnes

(Editor: Some interesting views from Ken which may well have some us getting out our copies of the films in question for a review of the points made. Incidentally, in correspondence with Ken, he said:

"If I may, I would like to thank all of the members who have written or phoned me expressing their appreciation for the Complete UA Sessions. There have been far too many for me to reply to personally. But I'm very grateful for their kind remarks." Ken did a fantastic job for us on local radio last October as you will have read in Bert Bishop's 'Bing on the Box'.)

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WHAT THE PAPERS SAY

Some old cuttings this time and what fascinating reading they make! Many thanks to Gary Hamann and to Scott Whalen.

Friday, October 4, 1935

No Whiskers! Bing! Crosby Ticketed

If Bing Crosby had been wearing his false whiskers the motorcycle officer might not have recognized him.

But he wasn't and Officer E. L. Stolp for the second time in six months drew the crooning picture actor to the curb in the 2000 block on N. Highland Ave. today and wrote out a speeding ticket.

And that wasn't all. The officer began asking questions about a revolver which Mr. Crosby had in his expensive coupe. When the crooner was unable to produce a gun permit, the officer ordered him to the Hollywood police station.

He explained satisfactorily that he merely had forgotten to bring along his gun-carrying authorization and the actor was allowed to continue on his way to the Paramount Studio.

But Bing didn't leave before he had his say....

"Seems funny I can't drive down the street without some officer picking on me," he opined, as he pocketed his gun and his ticket for driving 42 miles an hour in a 25-mile zone.

Introducing Count Bincrospinovich—No.! Our mistake. It's BING CROSBY, who, when a speed cop stopped him, probably would have welcomed these whiskers he wears in his new Paramount picture.

Columbus, Ohio Oct. 16, 1928

"RHYTHM BOYS" ARRIVE AND IN TWO SENSES.

Both in body and in artistry, the Paul Whiteman Rhythm Boys arrived at Keith-Albee Palace, Tuesday afternoon, when they were the show stoppers of the already splendid bill. This trio of zippy young men: Harry Barris, piano and song, Bing Crosby, songs, and Al Rinker, guitar and piano, work fast and furiously. They gave their own big record success, "Mississippi Mud" and "Wa-Da-Da" and "Sweet Sue." Their own numbers were followed by such favorites as "That's My Weakness Now" and "Nothing But Love."

This act shares headline honors with Jack Benny, the monologist. Roger Imhoff and Marcelle Coreene, in "The Pest House," are always well liked by Columbus act tasters.

"The Crash," with Milton Sills and Thelma Todd, crashes through acceptably on the silversheet.

'Variety' December 22, 1948

"Philco Television Playhouse's" presentation of "A Christmas Carol" on NBC-TV Sunday night was warm, tender and wholly evocative interpretation of the Charles Dickens classic. As an epilog, Bing Crosby made what was advertised as his first appearance on video via films with a rendition of "Silent Night," but this highly-publicized stint was completely overshadowed by the preceding dramatization. Film production on the Crosby number, which had the Bob Mitchell Boys Choir backing up, was disappointingly flat. (There was no mention of the fact that this section of the show was filmed, but viewers probably guessed it from the faded texture of the screen image. Crosby, incidentally, has been seen on video before this in several of his old pix.)

The familiar "Christmas Carol" story was mainly powered by Dennis King's brilliant performance as Scrooge. King projected the role so forcibly that it broke out of the small screen limitations into a three-dimensional portrait with a terrific emotional kick. Other members of the cast, including several juves, also played with moving sincerity. As usual, director-producer Fred Coe cut Samuel Taylor's adaptation into a fluid TV drama, skillfully handling the camera switchovers from the various well-constructed sets. There were some incidental flaws in the camera angles but these did not materially detract from the overall impact. More serious, however, was the repetitious use of a tricky photographic effect for the ghostly flights through space and time.

Plugs for the Philco sets were handled by Bert Lytell and Bob Stanton in their informal, but overlong chatty style.

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